

SPECIAL ISSUE

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A CHANCE FOR PEACE IN

## Central America

GUATEMALA

PAGE 9

HONDURAS

PAGE 11

NICARAGUA

PAGE 7

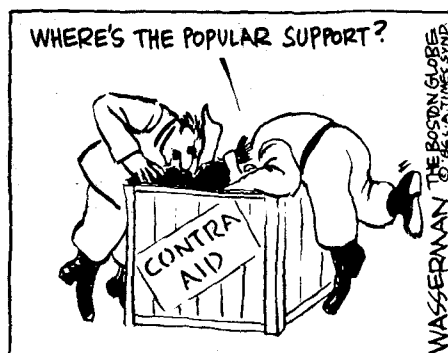
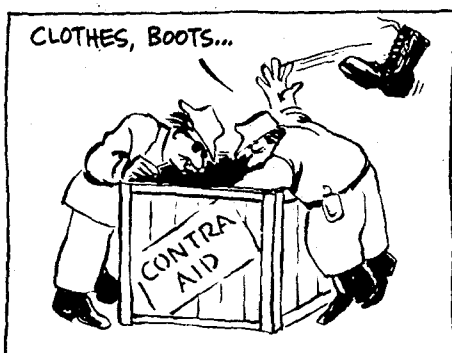
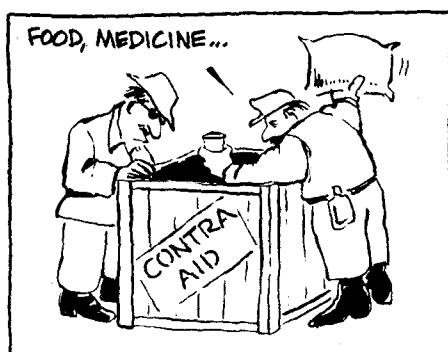
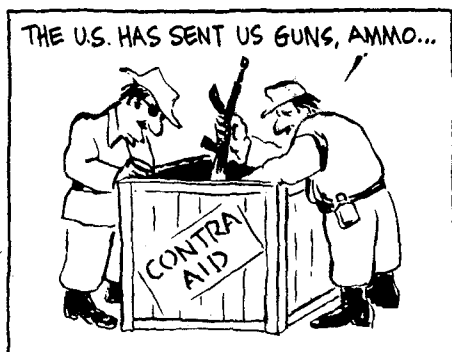
EL SALVADOR

PAGE 10

COSTA RICA

PAGE 8





L.A. Times Syndicate

## The grassroots push to end contra aid

By David Moberg

CHICAGO

Grinning his way through a successful, undistinguished political career, southern Illinois Democrat Alan "Al the Pal" Dixon ended up in a U.S. Senate seat in 1980. But the conservative Dixon brought frowns from many of his constituents last year when he was one of two Northern Democratic senators to vote for aid to the Nicaraguan contras.

Now he is the focus of a diverse, intense lobbying campaign to reverse that vote, part of a sophisticated national effort to halt contra aid. As a potential "swing" ballot, Dixon is one of about 30 members of Congress targeted by Countdown '87, a broad, Washington-based coalition

**Ironing boards:** By last week Neighbor to Neighbor organizers had recruited nearly 1,000 people through private home meetings to help twist Dixon's arm. That number included 200 who set up their ironing boards—eye-catching devices just the right height for letter-writing—in shopping centers throughout Chicago. In a few weekends, they collected more than 8,000 letters to Dixon. The crucial downstate campaign also started last week with fly-around press conferences featuring community leaders opposed to contra aid. Soon canvassers from Illinois Public Action Council, an affiliate of the Citizen Action network that traditionally has focused more on bread-and-butter issues like utility bills, will ask people if they oppose contra aid as they go door to door, then get signatures on letters to Dixon.

The campaign's second phase will recruit Democratic Party stalwarts close to Dixon, union officials, community leaders and past Dixon contributors to pressure the senator "to vote like a Democrat on this issue," according to Public Action director Bob Creamer. Already several machine Democratic war committeemen from fairly conservative Chicago neighborhoods have been recruited.

Finally, TV and radio ads—along with whatever publicity can be drummed up in local news outlets—will elicit more letters and phone calls from Dixon constituents. Similar campaigns will be mounted in other swing districts or states.

The ads, prepared by veteran West Coast political ad-maker Bill Zimmerman, will hit two major themes: fiscal priorities and Vietnam memories. "People feel there are many problems in the U.S. that have to be addressed before we send hundreds of millions of dollars to the contras," Zimmerman said. "That transcends political and ideological differences. Woven into this is the notion of the ineffectiveness of the contras. The second theme can best be described as echoes of Vietnam."

**The right's response:** Although the right has threatened its own campaign in support of contra aid and has run some hyperbolic TV spots, so far it has surfaced in Illinois only with an organized letter-to-the-editor campaign saying that even though Dixon is a Democrat, he's great on contra aid and deserves support. Anti-contra forces hope to persuade him that the Democratic constituencies are against him on this issue. Despite his gut conservatism, Dixon is quintessentially a political animal who values office above all else and is already wavering.

This political "campaign-style" approach to the issue, as Countdown '87 executive director Rosa DeLauro calls it, may be one of the best organized, politically sophisticated crusades on the left in many years. Its tactics include the best of grassroots mobilization, coalition-building (the mix includes church groups, anti-intervention organizations, labor and the extensive Citizen Action network), broadcast advertising, personal lobbying, phone banks and careful opinion polling.

Despite the momentary rise in support of contra aid

after Oliver North testified in July, the public mood remains ripe for such an effort. In August the ABC/ *Washington Post* poll showed 59 percent of Americans opposed military aid to the contras while 36 percent favored it, down slightly from a high of 70 percent opposition last January. Typically, women, minorities and Democrats have been most opposed, according to a report by Diane Feldman of the Analysis Group, a political polling firm. But polls taken last winter showed Reagan's policy was losing in all sub-groups, and public opinion in the South nearly matched other regions in opposition.

Typically, polls have shown more opposition when the questions have mentioned either military aid, overthrowing the Nicaraguan government or specific sums of money. But the polls also show ambivalence about cutting off aid entirely. Although they also indicate a concern about communism in Central America, there's a greater worry about U.S. entanglement in the region. Polls show the main reason people offer for opposing aid is that the money is needed for domestic issues, although there is also a strong sense that Nicaraguan affairs are none of our business.

**Diverse opposition:** But anti-contra ad-maker Zimmerman said in-depth interviews of "focus groups" show that "when you probe for feelings or emotion, [fear of another] Vietnam is much more important" than most polls reveal. But there is a right and left response to the meaning of Vietnam, with conservatives seeing it as a lesson in perfidy by a Congress that wouldn't unleash the military. Zimmerman's ads will attempt to turn even that feeling against the contra aid, since many of the swing members of Congress are in moderately conservative districts. "You've got to make TV and radio spots such that people can read in their own point of view," Zimmerman said. "If you project an anti-imperialist point of view, a large part of the audience will reject that analysis. If you don't project an anti-imperialist point of view but leave interpretation to the individual, then it serves our purpose."

Pollster Stanley Greenberg says the resilient majorities against contra aid that have persisted despite Reagan's pleadings over nearly seven years reflect "strong antipathies to involvement that go well beyond the contra aid issue." Although many on the left take the numbers as cheering signs of a latent progressive majority, Greenberg's latest probes of focus groups of political independents in conservative districts show that for many "there's a strong aversion to the region that goes from misinformation to racism." Contras and Sandinistas alike are seen as "unsmiling, dirty, armed Spanish people that [those interviewed] don't want to send their money to." A deep isolationism and sense that even allies "keep kicking us in the teeth" leads many to want to avoid involvement despite their hostility to communism. "You don't come away from this liking us as Americans for our attitudes toward the Third World," Greenberg said. "It doesn't reflect the best impulses in people."

So far the movements against contra aid seem willing to use the public opposition, whatever its source, to accomplish worthy ends, even if they hope for more. Vincent Cobb, coordinator of Days of Decision, which grew out of the April 25 anti-contra demonstration in Washington, talks of expanding opposition to "all war-related aid to the area" in light of the Arias peace plan. "Now our slogan is: 'Central American solutions to Central American problems.'"

Fred Ross Jr., executive director of Neighbor to Neighbor, says, "Most effective is the issue of Vietnam: 'We don't want to get involved in another Vietnam.' Next is the character and credibility of the contras: Who are they? The policy is unworkable, immoral and illegal. Then there's the sense of betrayal, what it's done to our system, everything this obsession has caused our government to do, and what it's done to our national priorities. Finally, we're appealing for a whole new approach, a new day that respects Central America."

The more the new anti-contra crusades can win support for such sentiments, the better political prospects for the U.S. will be. But if the campaigns succeed in blocking contra aid, it will reflect a temporary alliance of virtuous necessity with a dark side of the American psyche. □

## INSIDE STORY

focused on the contra vote expected this month. Neighbor to Neighbor, a San Francisco-based grassroots mobilizing group that is part of Countdown '87, is working on him as well. Simultaneously, another national coalition, Days of Decision, is organizing from Washington against contra aid throughout the country.

### CONTENTS

Inside Story: Stop contra aid campaigns .....	2
Conservative litmus test .....	3
In Short .....	4-5
Central American pact introduction .....	6
The pact: Nicaragua .....	7
The pact: Costa Rica .....	8
The pact: Guatemala .....	9
The pact: El Salvador .....	10
The pact: Honduras .....	11
Mexico: Hopes for a united left .....	12
Where will Nicaragua get its oil? .....	13
Editorial .....	14
Letters/Sylvia .....	15
Viewpoint: The jury for North .....	16
Ashes & Diamonds by Alexander Cockburn .....	17
In Print: Where is Nicaragua? .....	19
In the Arts: Big sticks at the Pam Am Games .....	20
Windsor McCay's fine 'tooning .....	21
Classifieds/Life in Hell .....	23
Happy Ollie Day .....	24



# Central America

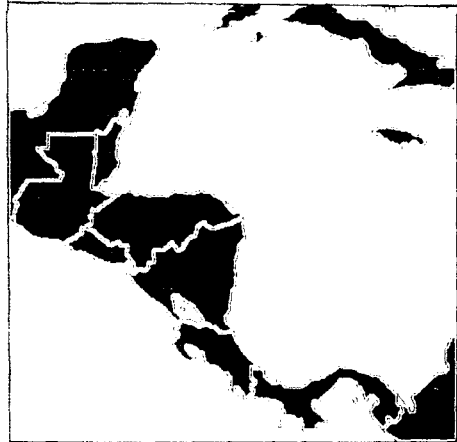
## A conservative backlash on Reagan's contra policy

By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

**T**HE LATEST COLLECTOR'S ITEM HERE IS a blue-and-white button reading, "Support the Contras, Impeach Reagan." The button evidences both the fury that conservatives currently feel toward the administration over its Central American policies and the immense political obstacles that stand in the way of the administration ever really changing its policy.

Conservatives objected both to the terms and the timing of Reagan's August 4 agreement with House Speaker Jim Wright. They didn't like the idea of proposing unilateral discussions between the U.S. and the Sandinistas—rather than between the contras and the Sandinistas—and they didn't sup-



port the administration's postponing its request for contra military aid until after a September 30 deadline for a ceasefire.

But most of all, conservatives objected to the administration's attempt to conciliate congressional contra critics instead of trying to capitalize further on Lt. Col. North's appearance to make a "full court press" for

contra aid. Presidential candidate Rep. Jack Kemp (R-NY) accused the president of "snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.... We've lost the dramatic moment. Had the president brought up a credible package [after North's appearance], I think we would have won."

New Right activist Paul Weyrich concurred. "If Mr. Reagan really believes he is not killing the contras with his new peace plan," Weyrich said, "then someone is not telling him the truth."

Conservatives were even more upset when Reagan said he was "encouraged" by the Arias Plan adopted August 7 by the leaders of the five Central American nations. In contrast to the Reagan-Wright proposal, the Arias plan does not require that the Sandinistas bar Soviet and Cuban troops. To conservatives, this means that Central American leaders have agreed not only to legitimize the Sandinista government, but to sanction the Soviet and Cuban presence in Nicaragua.

Speaking at a press conference at which he and Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC) introduced a bill for \$310 million in aid to the contras, Kemp, flanked by 28 conservative leaders, said, "Any plan that halts aid to the freedom fighters before the Soviet colonial presence is out of Nicaragua, before democracy comes to Nicaragua, is a plan that is flawed at its core and is doomed to fail."

The administration moved quickly to mollify conservatives. On August 12 a group of conservative leaders, including Weyrich and Heritage Foundation Vice President Burton Pines, were invited to the White House for a briefing. According to the conservative weekly *Human Events*, they were told by "high-powered administration officials" that



Rep. Jack Kemp accused the president of "snatching defeat from the jaws of victory."

"the president does not embrace the Arias plan, no matter what his rhetoric might suggest." And the president came by to tell them that he would "not let the contras down."

But the conservative leaders were not mollified, either by private assurances or by the president's public statements, which included an August 25 speech in Los Angeles reaffirming the "Reagan doctrine." To their mind, the damage had already been done. Reagan's pact with Wright had paved the way for the Central American regional peace agreement as well as destroying any political momentum that the White House had gained from North; and the agreement had given the Sandinistas the means of placating mod-

erate Democrats and Republicans, who might have voted for contra aid.

**Political campaign:** While conservatives have been up in arms over administration policies before, their reaction to the administration's Central American initiatives has been considerably harsher this time. And the opposition has also been considerably broader. Even Vice President Bush distanced himself from the administration policy. Speaking on a Miami radio station, Bush criticized the regional peace agreement and Reagan-Wright plan, saying, "We are not going to leave the contras twisting in the wind, wondering whether they are going to be done in by a peace plan."

*Continued on page 18*

### The theology of contra support

Within the conservative movement, there are two different rationales for supporting the contras. The most audible is that of Rep. Jack Kemp (R-NY) and the neo-conservative intellectuals who championed the National Endowment for Democracy. They claim that American foreign policy should be directed single-mindedly at spreading democracy; they claim that they oppose Marxist-Leninists and the Sandinistas because their political philosophy—and the system of government they erect—is antithetical to democracy.

This rationale dates back at least to President Woodrow Wilson's World War I crusade to "make the world safe for democracy," and to Harry Truman's justification of the Cold War. It hasn't necessarily guided policy, but it has invariably guided public explanation of policy. It has been embraced by the Reagan administration.

There is, however, another group of conservatives who reject democracy as a goal for political action, who see it as a means—and not necessarily the best in all cases—of defending economic liberty

and Western, Christian and, most recently, "Judeo-Christian" civilization. They see the Cold War not as a political struggle but as a kind of Armageddon of rival faiths. Whittaker Chambers, William F. Buckley Jr., Frank Meyer, Russell Kirk and the John Birch Society's Robert Welch took this view of the Cold War; and one can still find it in the pages of *National Review* and the *Modern Age*. If it is not as prevalent, it is because it is not as publicly salable as the more Wilsonian and liberal Democratic rationale.

But last month the old debate surfaced. On the August 13 *Cable News Network* show *Crossfire*, host Tom Braden forced Jack Kemp (R-NY), who was deeply influenced by neo-conservative and former liberal Democrat Irving Kristol, to clarify his support for global democracy. Braden asked Kemp what was wrong with Nicaragua being Communist if it minded its own business.

Kemp offered this interesting reply: "It doesn't matter to me if they want to be socialists; it doesn't matter if they want to mess up their economy.... What bothers

me and what history says is that democracies do not attack each other; democracies do not undermine each other; democracy means peace in Central America. If they want to be democratic socialists, I could care less, but so long as it is Marxist-Leninist, Tom, it is a threat to its neighbors."

In the *Washington Times*, staff columnist John Lofton took Kemp to task for his idolization of democracy. He warned Kemp that he had to get off his knees "and stop worshipping this Golden Calf, this false god called 'democracy.'" Lofton called Kemp's claims for democracy "sheer nonsense."

"Because democracy doesn't abolish original sin," he wrote, "democracies do not necessarily cease attacking each other...and democracy certainly wouldn't mean peace in Central America or anywhere else, for that matter."

Like the John Birch Society members of the early '60s, Lofton draws a sharp distinction between republics and democracies. He quotes the warning of Federalist reactionary Fisher Ames—who en-

dowed democracy with the classical sense of "mob rule"—that democracy will never be "kept of control of the fiercest and most turbulent spirits in the society; they will breathe into it all their own fury, and make it subservient to the worst designs of the worst men." Lofton advised Kemp that instead of promoting democracy he should promote "justice, liberty and freedom."

Lofton's own convictions most immediately reflect his commitment to Christian Reconstructionism, a bizarre movement led by R.J. Rushdoony. The Reconstructionists want to restore the biblical communities of Puritan New England in which the Bible was law. But in a broader sense, Lofton's views reflect an older strain of American conservatism—one that was not corrupted by the necessity to win political support from the AFL-CIO Cold Warriors and wavering Democrats. Its goals are anathema, but its attacks against the illusions and hypocrisy of right-wing global democrats often ring true.

—J.B.J.



# INSHORT

Joel Bleifuss

## Bikes not Bombs

"Some of the routes we use would make Ollie North proud," says Ken Hughes, director of the Washington-based Institute for Transportation and Development. He is referring to the 1,000 or so used bicycles the institute's Bikes not Bombs program has shipped to Nicaragua in the past two-and-a-half years. "There is a crying need for transportation in Nicaragua," says Hughes. "There is an incredible shortage of motor fuel and the buses are packed. We offer a tangible and positive way to react to what is going on." Bikes not Bombs distributes the bicycles to development workers, teachers and government employees who would otherwise have to walk between towns and villages. "As a result of our efforts the government has now announced that they will import 50,000 new bikes in the next three years because they see that the bikes make eminent sense as a form of transportation," says Hughes.

## Killing them one way or another

U.S. foreign policy is exposed as the open rot it is when one takes a look at pesticide regulation. U.S.-based chemical multinationals can legally export to the Third World pesticide poisons that are banned in the U.S. According to a report by the San Francisco-based Environmental Project on Central America, "By the mid-'60s and through the '70s, 40 percent of all U.S. pesticide exports went to Central America, making the region the world's highest per capita user of pesticides." These pesticides included toxic, but short-lived, organophosphates and the highly persistent organochlorines like DDT. Of the pesticides used in Central America an estimated 75 percent are either banned, restricted or unregistered in the U.S. The end result is a poisoned environment and poisoned population. More than 1,000 Guatemalans are treated for pesticide exposure each year. But according to Dr. Leon Muriel of the Ministry of Social Security, "The statistics we have don't reflect the reality and the enormity of the problem." Guatemalan cow's milk contains 9,000 percent more DDT than that allowed by U.S. standards. And people living in Central America's cotton growing regions have more DDT in their bodies than any other population group in the world. The pesticides are also wiping out animal populations. Along Costa Rica's Guanacaste River pesticides have all but exterminated armadillos, fish and crocodiles. And in some areas of Central America the honeybees are gone. These pesticides come home to roost in the Central American beef imports that supply burgers to the U.S. fast-food trade (see *In These Times*, June 10). The report further adds that of all the Central American countries "only Nicaragua has developed a comprehensive plan to use pesticides in a safer, more efficient manner." Nicaragua is also the only country to have banned the use of DDT.

## Quest for Peace

As Lt. Col. Oliver North was swaddling Congress in Old Glory, Quest for Peace, a Nicaraguan relief organization in Hyattsville, Md., was busy packing a 20-foot shipping container labeled, "Ollie North Reparations Shipment." The group described the shipment as "aid that is legal, moral, open, accountable and just." The load included more than seven tons of wound kits, wheelchairs, crutches, powdered milk, Spanish Bibles, clothes, educational supplies, frisbees, baseballs, bats and gloves. With the "Ollie North Reparations Shipment" the Quest for Peace campaign reached the \$50-million mark of its goal to send \$100 million in real humanitarian aid to Nicaragua by October. "The name on this truck is really symbolic. The aid inside can't begin to repair for the brutal destruction and loss of life in Nicaragua caused by the policies Oliver North, Ronald Reagan and others have funded and directed with private or public contra aid," said Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit. "The real scandal in this town is not the way the contra war has been run, the real scandal is the contra war itself."

## Playing second fiddle

When the U.S. has stopped military aid to Central American countries, Israel has come to the rescue. According to "The Israeli Connection: Guns and Money in Central America," a recent report by the New York-based North American Congress on Latin



**Graphic witness:** Between 1981 and 1983 exiled Guatemalan artist Roberto Cabrera created *Witness to Guatemala*, a series of 15 untitled collages. "As a whole," Cabrera says, "this series gives graphic witness to an infamous era and, at the same time, makes homage to all the men and women, the young and old, who are giving or who have given their lives in this process of national liberation." Full-color posters of two of his collages, including the one shown here, are available for \$15 each from Organization in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala, P.O. Box 25333, Chicago, IL 60625.

## Tending the psychological wounds of Central American conflict

Between 80,000 and 150,000 Guatemalan and Salvadoran refugees have fled their war-torn homelands and settled in the San Francisco Bay area. They lack money and immigration papers, as well as language and other skills needed to deal with this complex and foreign society.

Social service programs have developed to meet the refugees' need for food, shelter, legal assistance and health care. But until recently the mental health needs of the refugees have been overlooked.

Georgette Elizalde, a Catholic Charities social worker, recalls a Guatemalan woman who came with her two children seeking help. The woman explained that she had left Guatemala after her husband, a doctor, was taken by the military from their car and murdered. "The little one was the apple of his eye," said the woman. "She was holding his hand while they questioned him."

"During her story," says Elizalde, "the youngest child became rigid, almost catatonic. But the mother asked only for help with her family's material needs, not with the

obvious emotional difficulties facing them."

In response to the needs of families like this one, 15 refugee, religious and community groups have established a unique program to train refugees to serve as *promotores de salud mental*, or mental health promoters. The first 12 graduates of the course started work in May. The promoters give counseling and crisis support, and act as advocates for clients seeking help from the traditional mental health system.

For some refugees, the first step to becoming a promoter is dealing with their own psychological scars. "Sometimes the training sessions seemed almost like an encounter group," says promoter Karla Flores with a rueful smile. "It's really been a process of self-healing dealing with these issues."

The promoters are encouraged to view refugees' mental problems not as symptoms of being "crazy," but as "the normal reactions of normal people to extraordinary stresses," says program co-coordinator Jim Khoury-Quesada. Many refugees have experienced persecution and torture or the murder of family and friends. Some have personally watched as security forces tortured or murdered loved ones. The refugees come to the U.S. bearing the

weight of these memories, the fear of persecution and the guilt of having left others behind. This fear and guilt manifest in a range of problems, including depression, drug and alcohol abuse, paranoia, nightmares and insomnia.

The stresses facing refugees are exacerbated by their illegal status. Although torture, persecution and murder in Central America are well documented, the vast majority of the region's refugees have been denied asylum in the U.S. (see *In These Times*, July 22). The political bias is clear. While 33 percent of all applications for political asylum are granted under the provisions of the 1980 Refugee Act, 97 percent of Salvadoran and 99 percent of Guatemalan applications are denied. This denial forces refugees to live in constant fear of deportation and places barriers in the path of attempts to build a new life. Lacking documentation, Central American refugees are vulnerable to exploitation by employers and are denied access to the housing, employment and health services available to legally recognized refugees.

And many refugees are afraid to take advantage even of those local public services available to them without risk. "If you come from a place where people who have sought help from public agencies



have been murdered, then people's fears of government agencies here—from the police to the public health system—are valid," says Khoury-Quesada.

## From the mouth of the beast

Chicago journalist Peter Coogan spent his summer vacation in Nicaragua and filed this report.

On July 19 I travelled to Matagalpa for the eighth anniversary celebration of the Nicaraguan revolution. In his hour-and-20-minute speech President Daniel Ortega relayed some sobering statistics on the effects of the U.S. proxy war. Since 1980 the war has claimed 43,176 victims and drained more than \$1 billion from the economy. The war absorbs 46 percent of the national budget, or 32 percent of the gross national product.

What is the U.S. angle on Ortega's speech? I went to the U.S. Embassy in Managua and asked what it meant.

"Unlike past years, there was nothing in his speech to lift up the true believer in the crowd," said Alberto M. Fernandez, the embassy's press attache and a United States Information Agency officer. "It was grim."

"They thought [the Iran-contra scandal] was the death-knell of the Reagan administration and support for the contras," he said. "They thought, 'We have been delivered. We are home free.' They knew they faced a tough year, but that once that money is gone they were home

Santiago, a Salvadoran promoter who was tortured himself in 1984, expands on this theme: "Their way is to destroy the ability to think, so you think you are dead, that you

free. But the hearings didn't go as they had hoped."

Fernandez explained that Nicaragua is now holding out for a new, perhaps more sympathetic, administration in the White House and that would take two years.

He said current congressional funding of the contras made 1987 a very hot year for Nicaragua. There were more military engagements than ever before. In the first six months of 1987 the government reported 300 military clashes with the contras. This he compared to the 100 clashes reported in 1986. As for 1984 and 1985, he described those as years of slight funding and "low-level conflicts."

Fernandez appealed to me as "part of the left-biased media" not to under-report the contra's military action. He quoted Ortega's speech to note that the contras had 6,000 *efectivos*, or armed men, inside Nicaragua. In late July contra leader Adolfo Calero put that number at 12,000 during a "Cruise for Contras" fundraiser—a tour of Lake Michigan on a boat loaded with admiring Young Republicans.

I asked Fernandez if the contras have successfully disrupted Nicaragua's economy.

"The biggest effect on the Sandinista economy is mismanagement," he answered. "Some is effected by the war, some by the embargo. But they say everything is

are powerless. That is why the refugees are afraid. But the refugees trust the promoters. With us they better."

—Rachel Kreier

due to the aggression. The people aren't buying it. Not after eight years they aren't."

But isn't it the strategy of the contras to destabilize the economy to alienate Nicaraguans from their government?

"The contras' strategy is victory," Fernandez said. "They inflict damage whenever and wherever they can, like the Viet Cong, or the French Resistance. It is a war of aggression. We say it. We are aiding one side of a civil war."

In his speech Ortega had said, "This is not a low-intensity conflict. This is a war of intervention." Fernandez took exception to that. "Why can't it be both?" he asked.

Fernandez also complains about Ortega's death statistics. He said Ortega fails to "break those figures down. Half of [the dead] would be contras. [And he doesn't] include those who died in state security."

As I left his office, Fernandez gave me his business card, and told me to call him if I had any questions. The phone number on his card read "66011." But he said that was a misprint and it was actually 66611. I looked at him, and he volunteered, "The number of the beast!"

I asked if Nicaragua had assigned that number on purpose and if the U.S. had protested.

"No," Fernandez said. "We like to be vilified."

—Peter Coogan

## Sister-city ties that bind

In the mid-'50s when President Eisenhower first created Sister Cities International, Nicaragua was ruled by the U.S.-supported Somoza dictatorship. But U.S. and Nicaraguan citizens are maintaining "sister-city" ties between their respective communities even as the Reagan administration tries to topple the Nicaraguan government. In fact, today the two countries have more than 50 sister-city relationships, twice as many as a year ago.

Although Sister Cities International is a non-governmental organization with affiliates in 87 different countries, a portion of its funding comes from the U.S. government's Agency for International Development (AID) and AID does not spend money in countries that have strong political differences with the U.S. Though this does not prevent the Sister Cities International from assisting with linkages to Nicaraguan cities, it does prevent that organization from funding programs in that country.

The irony is that in countries where peaceful exchange is most needed it is being discouraged. The result is that U.S. cities have established relationships with their Nicaraguan sister cities that are in-

dependent of the national organization. The split brings accusations of "politicization" from both sides.

Eisenhower's original idea was that citizens could do more for the peace process than politicians, and he encouraged Americans to learn more about other people and cultures. "I believe that the people in the long run are going to do more to promote peace than governments," he said. "Indeed, I think that the people want peace so much that one of these days governments better get out of their way and let them have it."

Alan Wright, coordinator of the New Haven, Conn., sister-city project, says his organization has sent 24 "thematic" delegations—such as groups of artists, health workers and educators—to its sister city of Leon. "These are not the same old people who protest U.S. Central American policy. These are people who want to do something positive and something that speaks to their needs as well." Wright says some whose skills "might be considered marginal in the U.S. can do work in an orphanage or senior center [in Nicaragua] and make a positive contribution."

Sister-city projects often consist of exchanges of delegations or material aid. A church in Seattle sent a gospel choir to Managua. People

from a La Crosse, Wisc., food cooperative gave five dairy cows to the town of Chiltepe so children could have milk. Members in the New Haven, Conn., area adopted a Leon day-care center, donating paint, labor and playground equipment.

In order to expand this citizens' diplomacy movement, 26 Nicaraguans—including Sandinista officials and church workers—met in June in Seattle with 350 Americans at the "U.S.-Nicaragua Sister Cities 1987 Conference."

Roy Wilson, vice-president of the Seattle-Managua Sister City Association told *In These Times*, "Sister-city relationships are extremely empowering because they give U.S. citizens and their Nicaraguan counterpart a concrete tool to make their lives better and to gain a broader view of the world."

The three-day conference focused on how to start and run cultural and technical exchange programs. Conference participants also discussed how the sister-city movement can be expanded in the U.S. To that end, Gov. Miguel Murillo of Nicaragua's Central Pacific region brought to Seattle portfolios of Nicaraguan towns that are interested in having a U.S. sister city.

—Leslie Florio & Joan E. McGrath

America, in 1977 the U.S. cut off military aid to Guatemala because of a "consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights." Nine years later Gen. Benedicto Lucas Garcia, a former chief of staff of the Guatemalan military, told the Tel Aviv newspaper *Ha'aretz* that Israel "was the only country that gave us military support in our battle against the guerrillas." He added, "Israel provided us with advisers who helped us use the military equipment we purchased from Israel." And in 1977 when the U.S. cut off military aid to El Salvador because of gross human rights violations, Israel filled the void. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, between 1975 and 1979, 83 percent of El Salvador's military imports came from Israel. And in 1984 when Congress cut off aid to the contras, Israeli support helped take up the slack. Robert K. Simmons, a former staff director of the Senate Intelligence Committee, told the *Boston Globe* that the aid Israel gave the contras early in 1984 "became crucial to the war's continuation."

## Stamping out unjust laws

Want to buy a Nicaraguan postage stamp? For \$1 the Wisconsin-based Trade for Peace, Inc., will sell you this Nicaraguan product and make you a criminal who has violated Treasury Department regulations that prohibit trade with Nicaragua. The regulations were drawn up following President Reagan's Executive Order 12513 of May 1985 that declared economic war on Nicaragua. Trade for Peace, based in Madison, was carefully set up as a legal business to ensure that if the government hauls it to court it will have to be for violating the trade embargo. The company has a three-person board of directors and a corporate motto—"Low-intensity resistance to low-intensity conflict." For sale are several thousand postage stamps, a variety of handcrafts and a few \$200 paintings from Solenginane, an artists' collective founded by Minister of Culture Father Ernesto Cardinal. According to Leonard Cizewski, the coordinator of the project and company director, although Trade for Peace has so far limited its civil disobedience market to Wisconsin, a nationwide mail-order campaign is set for the fall.

## I'll take the Karl Marx stamp

No you won't. Nicaragua's Marx postage stamp—the one that Reagan and Bush so often pull out when riding the jingo circuit—is out of print. Trade for Peace (see above story) was also unable to get Thomas Jefferson, George Washington or Babe Ruth stamps that appeared with Marx in a postal series on great world leaders. The company still has stamps commemorating the pope's U.S. visit, but they're selling fast. The one marking Lenin's 115th birthday, however, is available.

## Sandinistas and Indians

*Struggle over Autonomy: A Report on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua*, a readable study by the American Friends Service Committee, provides a short political history of the Sandinista's failures—and recent successes—in governing Nicaragua's isolated eastern coast. The Quaker political-action network's report examines the Sandinista's supremely stupid reaction to the movement for autonomy by Nicaragua's indigenous peoples. It tells how in December 1984 the Nicaraguan government, having realized its folly, began negotiating with Brooklyn Rivera, one of the Miskito rebel leaders. Those talks broke down in May 1985. (According to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, before contra leader Adolfo Calero testified before Congress he told reporters that some of the money he received from Oliver North was used to pay Rivera to break off negotiations with the Sandinistas.) But diplomatic setbacks aside, that same spring the government established a National Autonomy Commission and charged it with drawing up a plan that offered limited autonomy to the coastal peoples. In September 1986 the commission presented a preliminary draft of autonomy statutes for the Atlantic coast. Among other things, they guarantee the right to a bilingual and bicultural education. And this April, 1,500 representatives from the different coastal ethnic groups ratified the statutes. The report concludes: "Autonomy on the Atlantic coast may well be a beacon for oppressed Indian people throughout the hemisphere. As it succeeds, it will contribute to the overall Indian rights struggle throughout the Americas."



# Central America

**"Y**ou'd be surprised," said Ronald Reagan after a 1982 trip to Latin America. "They're all individual countries."

Despite this epiphany, President Reagan continues to treat those countries as trust territories of a United States of the Free World, dependent on their northern uncle for protection against the intrusion of foreign ideologies.

That world view, largely shared by Latin American leaders in the '50s and '60s, has been supplanted by an understanding that the Latin American nations have more in common with each other than with their giant neighbor.

This understanding inspired five Central American presidents to produce a regional peace agreement, based on the plan put forward by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias last February and continuing the Contadora peace process initiated in 1983 by Latin American neighbors (see "Previous Peace Plans" below, left). The agreement the presidents signed on August 7 in Guatemala City—to which this issue of *In These Times* is devoted—imposed no special conditions on Nicaragua, implicitly treating it as a legitimate member of the Central American community, and affirmed that Latin Americans could find solutions to their own problems without the help of the U.S.

The considerable achievement of getting five leaders with divergent ideologies to commit to the same program was doubly remarkable in the face of U.S. obstruc-

tion. The Reagan administration, sensing that a negotiated settlement was dangerously possible, advanced a plan of its own on August 4 that attempted to isolate Nicaragua from the "four democracies," with the U.S. giving itself the role of regional policeman (see "Two Visions for Central America," below, right). Even the nations most dependent on U.S. subsidies rejected this Cold-War approach to the Western Hemisphere.

From Guatemala City, the road to peace passed through San Salvador, where on August 19 the foreign ministers began hammering out the details, despite foot-dragging by Honduras, and then on August 22 to Caracas, Venezuela, where a pan-Latin American commission on verification was set up. This commission will meet in December to evaluate how well the terms of the accord have been fulfilled.

While the peace process still appears to be on track, it faces landmines in every country involved. *In These Times* asked correspondents in each of the signatories—Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras—to report on the status of the agreement, explore each nation's relationship with the U.S. and examine how their internal situations affect the region's prospects for peace. Despite their differences, the countries are united by a growing independence that promises to survive Reagan's attempts to sabotage the Central American agreement.

## PREVIOUS PEACE PLANS

### THE ENDERS ROUND

August 12, 1981

The Reagan administration proposed not to use force against Nicaragua and to curb the activities of Nicaraguan expatriates if Nicaragua reduced its armed forces and halted alleged aid to Salvadoran rebels. Arturo Cruz, then Nicaraguan ambassador to the U.S. and later a contra leader, said the U.S. position was "like the conditions of a victorious power."

### THE AMBASSADORIAL ROUND

April 8, 1982

In this proposal, the U.S. added stipulations about "political pluralism" to the Enders proposal. These talks were abandoned by the U.S. in August 1982 and leaked White House documents later indicated that the proposal was designed to "co-opt [the] negotiations issue."

### CONTADORA SUMMIT

January 8, 1983

Panama, Mexico, Venezuela and Colombia formed the Contadora Group to call for the five Central American countries to negotiate.

### CONTADORA DOCUMENT OF OBJECTIVES

September 9, 1983

The Contadora Group and the Central American countries agreed to a framework for an agreement, involving democratization, an end to support for insurgencies, arms reduction and an end to foreign military bases and advisers.

### MANZANILLO TALKS

June 1, 1984

Secretary of State George Shultz resumed bilateral negotiations with Nicaragua. The talks were broken off soon after Reagan was re-elected.

### CONTADORA DRAFT TREATY

September 7, 1984

This treaty followed the framework of the Document of Objectives. When Nicaragua offered to sign it, U.S. allies reject the pact.

### TEGUCIGALPA DRAFT TREATY

October 19, 1984

El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica's draft treaty did not restrict the U.S. military presence in Central America or bind the U.S. to cut off contra aid. Nicaragua declined to sign.

### CARABALLEDA DECLARATION

January 12, 1986

The Contadora nations and the Contadora Support Group—Argentina, Peru, Brazil and Uruguay—called on the U.S. to help the peace process by stopping contra aid.

### "FINAL" CONTADORA DRAFT TREATY

June 6, 1986

The version Nicaragua agreed to sign was modified by withdrawing provisions on arms limitations and military exercises that were objectionable to the U.S. Honduras and El Salvador still rejected the treaty.

Charts compiled by Jim Naureckas

## TWO VISIONS FOR CENTRAL AMERICA

### REGIONAL PEACE AGREEMENT

All countries must offer amnesty to insurgents.

All countries must enter into dialogue with unarmed opposition groups.

All countries must end states of emergency.

All countries must hold free elections when terms of present leaders expire. Elections for a Central American parliament will be held in 1988.

All countries must end aid to insurgents and exclude them from their territories.

Negotiations on security issues will involve Central American nations under the Contadora framework.

The Agreement will be verified by Latin Americans.

Measures will go into effect by November with provisions for follow-up negotiations.

### REAGAN PLAN

Nicaragua must offer amnesty to the contras.

Nicaragua must negotiate a cease-fire with contras who do not accept the amnesty.

Nicaragua must end its state of emergency.

Nicaragua must hold new elections before the president's term expires.

U.S. will cut off military aid to contras if Nicaragua cuts off military aid from Communist countries and demobilizes its forces. U.S. will maintain "humanitarian" aid to contras.

Security negotiations will include the U.S.

U.S. will unilaterally verify compliance.

Negotiations must be completed by Sept. 30, 1987.

### U.S. MILITARY AID TO CENTRAL AMERICA, 1981-1986 (in millions)

El Salvador	\$784.2
Honduras	\$375.7
Costa Rica	\$27.9
Guatemala	\$7.8
Nicaragua	\$0.0

Source: Coalition for a New Foreign Policy



By David R. Dye

MANAGUA

FROM NICARAGUA'S VIEWPOINT, THE KEY planks in the regional peace agreement are Honduras' commitment not to allow its territory to be used as a staging area for the contras, and the fact that for the first time all area countries have called on the U.S. government to stop aid to the Nicaraguan insurgents.

But Nicaraguan leaders caution that peace is not around the corner and that implementation of the accords will be difficult, because they expect Reagan administration sabotage.

"We cannot lower our guard in the defense area," said President Daniel Ortega recently. And Sandinista military leaders have warned troops that the danger of a U.S. invasion is now greater than ever. The war in Nicaragua has so far claimed more than 20,000 lives and caused up to \$3 billion in total losses to the country's economy.

**Diplomatic victory:** Nevertheless, the government clearly regards the agreement as a diplomatic victory that puts the U.S. on the defensive. Foreign Ministry negotiator Mauricio Herdocia noted that U.S. allies El Salvador and Honduras had bucked Washington's wishes on the accord. And he added, "Everything indicates that the Reagan administration's request for more contra aid faces serious obstacles. Reagan will not be able to impose his plan over the plan of the Central Americans."

The agreement accepts the Nicaraguan principle that all the conditions of peace must go into effect simultaneously. Sandinista officials have stated repeatedly that the government will not carry out its key concession, lifting a five-year state of emergency and restoring full political rights, until aggression against their country ceases. Nicaragua demands both that the U.S. cut off aid to the contras and that Honduras act to disarm insurgent forces and move them back from border areas before the agreement's November 7 deadline.

In order to smooth the diplomatic road, the Sandinistas have made goodwill gestures toward their neighbors, withdrawing a World Court suit charging Costa Rica with supporting the contras as well as postponing a similar suit against Honduras. In a quick trip to Havana, Ortega also elicited a statement of full support for the peace accords from Cuban leader Fidel Castro.

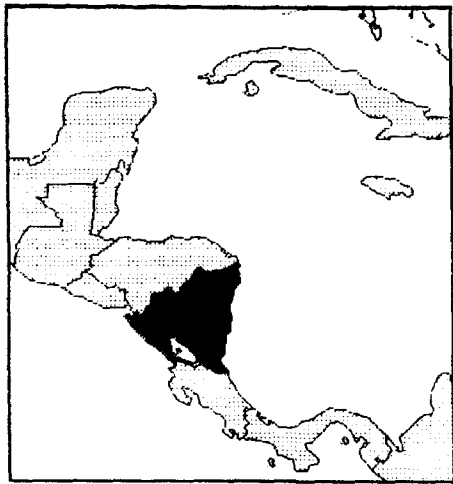
At the same time, realizing the world spotlight is on them, the Nicaraguans have moved rapidly to implement the initial steps called for in the agreement. On August 26 Ortega named the four members of a national reconciliation commission, which will be responsible for overseeing implementation of the agreement. Ortega chose the group from lists provided by the Catholic Church and opposition parties.

**The opposition's view:** The process of making the lists highlighted the broad split in Nicaraguan opposition forces. One camp consists of political parties that contested the 1984 elections and have been willing to work within the Sandinista political setup to widen the space for liberal democracy. The other centers on the so-called Democratic Coordinator, a coalition of right-wing parties, unions and business groups that have abstained from official political participation.

The two groups were unable to produce a single list, so Ortega chose a candidate from the one drawn up by the more participatory parties: Mauricio Diaz of the Popular Social Christian Party.

# A 'diplomatic victory' for Managua

Among the participating parties, response to the agreement has been generally favorable. "We are moderately optimistic," said Luis Humberto Guzmán, parliamentary leader for the Popular Social Christian Party, about prospects for implementation. "By signing this accord, the Nicaraguan govern-



ment has committed itself to a series of steps which tend to democratize our society.

"The U.S. Congress should realize that the best thing to do is to give the Sandinistas an opportunity to fulfill the agreements, freezing financial assistance to the contras," added Guzmán.

Under the agreement, the Sandinistas have reiterated a promise to hold municipal elections next year and agreed to hold elections for a Central American Parliament. Lifting the state of emergency, which allows press censorship and restricts political activity, will facilitate efforts by Guzmán's party to organize political opposition to the Sandinistas in these and subsequent votes. The next presidential balloting is scheduled for 1990.

On the other side of the opposition, leaders of the Democratic Coordinator have criticized the agreement for not incorporating the contras directly into the negotiating process. Coordinator Vice President Ramiro Gurdian was quoted as saying, "What we want most is to sit the counterrevolution and the FSLN [Sandinistas] down with us so that we can define the bases of democracy."

Many in this opposition grouping say that without the contras, the Sandinistas will move toward totalitarian rule. Observers fear those affiliated with Coordinator will work to sabotage the accords, provoking confrontations with the government over ongoing political restrictions—and then blaming the Sandinistas for not keeping promises of political freedom.

On August 15, 200 people inaugurating the Coordinator's new headquarters clashed with police after trying to mount a political rally without prior authorization. (Permits for outdoor demonstrations are required under the country's emergency laws, still in effect.) Authorities arrested several of the group's leaders, including the head of an anti-government human rights commission, accusing them of provocation and attempting to boycott the agreement. The next day the official newspaper *Barricada* published photos of U.S. Vice-Consul Gary Grappo at the Coordinator's event.

**The role of the church:** In a sustained attempt to torpedo the peace accord internally, much will depend on the attitude of Cardinal Obando, a bitter critic of the Sandinista revolution. The Nicaraguan prelate has so far given little indication of his feel-

ings, merely expressing hope that the agreement can be fulfilled. The new situation may give Obando the chance to exercise a mediating role similar to that he played between the Sandinistas and Somoza in 1979. But observers of church politics note that over the past year the cardinal has quietly obstructed a Vatican-inspired effort to promote dialogue between the Nicaraguan bishops and the Sandinista government.

Ortega appointed Obando from a list of three equally hard-line bishops to the national reconciliation commission. Also named to the commission were Sergio Ramirez, Sandinista vice president, and Gustavo Parajon of the Protestant Ecumenical Council for Development. With Diaz of the Popular Social Christians, the group seems capable of working for democratization within a constitutional framework.

Some Sandinista opponents stress that the government could help the peace effort by taking several unilateral steps short of abrogating the state of emergency at the end of the 90-day term. The Sandinistas have already announced that Bishop Pablo Vega and Father Bismarck Carballo, two exiled Nicaraguan clerics, will be allowed to return. Other possible actions include allowing opposition daily *La Prensa*, closed last year, to reopen with only minor censorship, returning the Catholic Radio station to the church and moving ahead with amnesty for many people accused of collaborating with the contras.

Sandinista Party Vice Coordinator Bayardo Arce in a recent address to party youth leaders indicated the government was

considering these possible steps. Arce also addressed the implications of the regional peace agreement for the party faithful, some of whom have reportedly been disconcerted by the government's concessions.

Arce told his audience, "We have decided to convert these commitments into part of the immediate political program of the Sandinista Front." Noting that "peace has its cost," the Sandinista leader affirmed that when the emergency is lifted, restoring full freedoms, the party must prepare itself for a situation of greater political competition. The opposition, he warned, will have more

## NICARAGUA

space to manipulate popular opinion over current economic difficulties.

The view prevailing among political analysts here is that if the peace process can be kept on track, the prospect is for a significant political opening in the country. Nevertheless, optimism is tempered by a recognition that the Reagan administration will do everything in its power to keep the Nicaraguan counterrevolution alive.

**The contra question:** Excluded from the regional parley, the contras meanwhile insist that they must take part in the peace process and have vowed to continue the struggle against the revolutionary government. But Sandinista military sources report inflicting increasingly heavy losses on waning contra forces, which they estimate at fewer than 6,000.

On August 19, the government presented to the media a man named Lester Ponce Silva, described as head of contra military intelligence in the northern border zone. He told reporters that the regional peace pact had led him to accept amnesty. According to Ponce, many other contras are ready to follow suit.

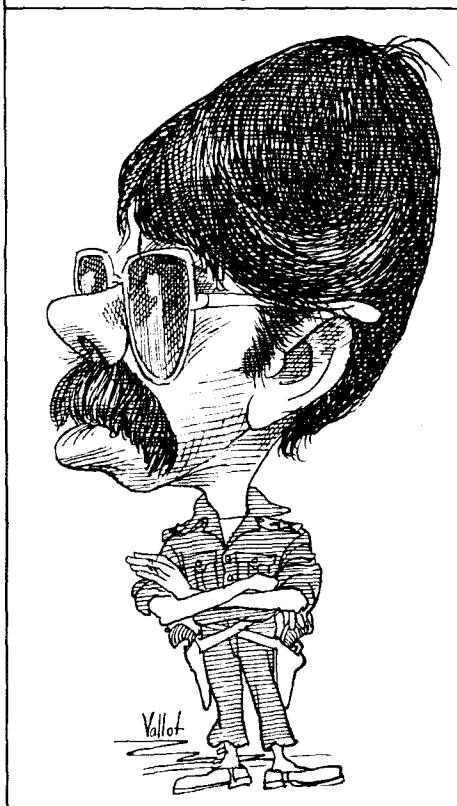
Nicaraguan Chancellor Miguel D'Escoto has rejected attempts by Salvadoran President Jose Napoleon Duarte to condition dialogue with the Sandinistas and the contras. D'Escoto pointed out that the accord stipulates as valid participants in dialogue only those insurgents who have accepted amnesty. He went on to refute the longstanding Reagan thesis of "symmetry" between the two countries' conflicts, noting that U.N. resolutions have called for dialogue with the rebels in El Salvador while backing Nicaragua's stand of insisting on direct talks with Washington. (see story on page 10).

After so many years of war most Nicaraguans seem to regard the regional peace agreement with wary optimism. While those strongly opposed to the Sandinistas voice doubts about the government's willingness to comply with what it has signed, many revolutionary supporters are dubious that the U.S. will allow the peace process to be realized.

The attitude of the wavering but nationalistic center is best summed up in the words of a Managua hotel receptionist, who said, "If the contras lay down their arms, we'll lay ours down, too, but without any commitment not to take them up again. If they attack us, we're going to respond anew."

David R. Dye is a doctoral candidate at Stanford University who has lived in Managua for four years.

President Daniel Ortega



**The Sandinistas have agreed to end the state of emergency and restore political rights—but only if the U.S. and Honduras move to end the contra insurgency.**



# Arias sees a dream become reality

By Tony Avirgan  
and Martha Honey

SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA

**O**FFICIALS HERE SAY THEY WERE SUR-  
prised at the ease and rapidity of  
agreement among the Central  
American presidents on Costa  
Rican President Oscar Arias' regional peace  
plan.

The Costa Rican government officials who  
were involved in negotiating the agreement  
say an important factor in making the pact  
possible was the ill-timed introduction of the  
Reagan Central American peace plan, and  
the way it was introduced on the eve of the  
Guatemala City summit.

When Arias, who was still in Costa Rica,  
heard that officials in Washington were say-  
ing that the Reagan plan was being sent to  
Guatemala for consideration by the Central  
American presidents, he was furious. The  
Costa Rican president ordered his foreign  
minister, Rodrigo Madrigal Nieto, to keep all  
preliminary discussions focused on the only  
agreed-upon agenda item—consideration of  
the Arias plan.

This was done. Reagan's plan was publicly  
praised as a positive step forward by all pres-  
idents, including Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua.  
But the Reagan plan was quietly set aside  
during the working sessions of the summit.

Arias had created a pride among the reg-  
ional presidents based on the possibility of  
Central Americans solving their own prob-  
lems. The Reagan proposal was seen as a  
crude intrusion into Central American af-  
fairs.

The Costa Rican presidential delegation  
went to Guatemala August 6 expecting two  
long days of tense negotiations among the  
five often-feuding Central American leaders.  
They expected particular difficulties from  
the right and left of the region—Jose Napo-  
leon Duarte of El Salvador and Daniel Ortega  
of Nicaragua.

But soon after the first day of meetings  
got off to a late start at 4:30 p.m., Arias  
noticed a lack of hostility between Ortega  
and Duarte. By 1 a.m., all five presidents had  
agreed on a regional peace plan and Ortega  
and Duarte capped off the extraordinary  
night with an unprecedented toast to peace  
in Central America.

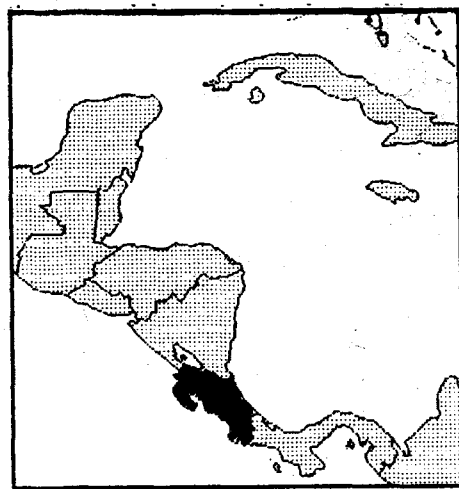
Arias had accomplished what almost no  
one thought he could. In a period of six  
months he had managed to bring the presi-  
dents of Central America together on a set  
of principles that, if followed, promise to end  
decades of bloodshed. During the course of  
those six months, Arias was accused by the  
left of being a tool of Reagan and was ac-  
cused by the right, including those in the  
White House, of naively playing into the  
hands of the Sandinistas. In the end, his prob-  
lems with the left had disappeared but his  
problems with Washington had intensified.

**Behind Duarte's signature:** Arias and  
his aides believe that the biggest single fac-  
tor facilitating a breakthrough was the at-  
titude of Duarte, the Salvadoran president  
who had been responsible at the last minute  
for scuttling Arias' first attempt to bring the  
presidents together last June. It was gener-  
ally accepted that Duarte had done this on  
instructions from Washington. In prelimi-  
nary talks Arias had conducted with each  
Central American president, Duarte had  
been the least enthusiastic about the Costa

Rican proposal. It was assumed that at the  
Guatemala City meeting the Salvadoran  
leader would not be making his own deci-  
sions.

However, as soon as the meeting got un-  
derway it was clear that Duarte was as an-  
xious as anyone else for an agreement. Appa-  
rently, Duarte's independence from Wash-  
ington was the result of his increasingly bad  
relations with the Reagan White House.

Costa Rican officials say Duarte com-  
plained to them that the Reagan administra-



his Christian Democratic Party in order to  
clear the way for a victory by the far right  
in the Salvadoran elections 18 months from  
now.

Duarte lamented that for over a year El  
Salvador has not received a penny of U.S.  
aid other than military. Lack of funds, he  
said, had caused his government to stagnate  
and his popularity to plummet. As a condi-  
tion for the resumption of aid, the Salvadoran  
president reportedly said, the U.S. was de-  
manding economic reforms that would  
surely make his government even more un-  
popular than it already is.

Duarte said he realized his own future as  
a politician was finished and that his only  
goals now were to gain a place for himself  
in history as a peacemaker and to block an  
election victory by the far right, which he  
felt would result in a terrible blood bath. The  
Arias peace plan, he reportedly said, could  
help achieve both of these goals.

Costa Rican sources say Duarte seemed

to think he was doing something subversive  
by signing a peace accord that was looked  
upon with disfavor by Washington and the  
generals of the Salvadoran army. One Costa  
Rican official said Duarte joked with

## COSTA RICA

Guatemalan President Vinicio Cerezo, say-  
ing, "If the generals don't let me come home,  
can I live in exile in Guatemala?"

Ortega's ready compliance, although sur-  
prising, was somewhat more predictable.  
Costa Rican analysts say the Arias plan of-  
fered Ortega's government the acceptance  
by the rest of Central America that has  
eluded the Sandinistas during eight years in  
power. It also provided hope for ending the  
debilitating contra war, thus giving relief to  
the beleaguered Nicaraguan economy.

**The price of peace:** No matter what ben-  
efits the leaders of Nicaragua and El Salvador  
found in the plan, the initiative has cost the  
Costa Rican leadership dearly. Arias' deter-  
mined opposition to military aid for the con-  
tras and commitment to finding a peaceful  
solution to the conflicts of Central America  
have provoked strong economic and politi-  
cal retaliatory measures by the Reagan ad-  
ministration.

While publicly praising Costa Rica's long-  
standing friendship with the U.S., privately  
Costa Rican officials list numerous hostile  
actions by Washington:

- None of the \$140 million in U.S. aid legis-  
lated for Costa Rica has been disbursed for  
the past six months.

- During the previous administration of Luis  
Alberto Monge, who quietly collaborated  
with the U.S. and the contras, U.S. aid soared  
to more than \$300 million annually.

**Costa Rican President  
Oscar Arias succeeded  
in forging an agreement.  
But the U.S. is making  
him pay a price for peace.**



President Oscar Arias

- The Reagan administration has recently  
slapped unusually strict bans and restric-  
tions on flowers, clothing and some other  
Costa Rican exports to the U.S., thus hurting  
foreign exchange earnings.

- The U.S. last month refused, for the first  
time, to intervene with commercial banks  
on Costa Rica's behalf. The banks rejected  
an Arias proposal for rescheduling Costa  
Rica's foreign debt. The failure to reach ag-  
reement with the banks has made Costa Rica  
ineligible for further bank loans and held-up  
agreements with the International Monetary  
Fund, the World Bank and European donor  
countries.

- Costa Rican officials say they suspect  
the Reagan administration's failure to ap-  
point a new ambassador for over seven  
months is a sign of Washington's displea-  
sure.

"Isn't it a shame that the U.S., the biggest  
democracy in the world, can't name an am-  
bassador to Costa Rica, the smallest democ-  
racy in the world?" quipped a presidential  
adviser.

One top Arias aide said that despite the  
irragate revelations and the Central Ameri-  
can peace plan, "there has been no change.  
This embassy is not here for dialogue or  
political development in Costa Rica. It's still  
here with the aim of creating a southern front  
[for the contras]."

- Costa Rican officials say they are sur-  
prised at the pettiness and viciousness of  
the Reagan administration's attack against  
Arias. They say White House pressure forced  
the resignation last month of one of Arias'  
top advisers from a United Nations post.  
John Biehl, a Chilean, had been working for  
the United Nations Development Program  
(UNDP), where he was assigned to advise  
the Costa Rican president's office on  
economic policy.

But Biehl, a close friend of Arias since  
they were college classmates, advised the  
president in political matters as well and  
played a key role in formulating the Arias  
peace plan. U.S. pressure for his resignation  
is said to have begun in June after he accom-  
panied the Costa Rican leader to a tense  
White House meeting with Reagan, Bush and  
other top officials. A Costa Rican at the meet-  
ing says Arias aggressively defended his  
peace proposal and told Reagan that "only  
two countries in the world support your con-  
tra policy, the United States and Grenada."

**Revenge:** While U.S. pressure on Costa  
Rica is not unusual, this time Arias—unlike  
his predecessor—has not buckled. He has  
pursued efforts to rid the country of contra  
activities and reach a regional peace accord  
despite U.S. hostility.

U.S. Embassy spokesman Mark Krishik de-  
nies that any of these measures are politi-  
cally motivated. However, former U.S. Am-  
bassador to Costa Rica Francis McNeil told  
a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee last  
month that "it is impossible to avoid the  
suspicion that Costa Rica's 'less favored na-  
tional treatment' is a form of revenge for  
having the temerity to disagree with us about  
the contras."

An economic adviser to the Costa Rican  
government put it bluntly: "They want our  
economy to get out of hand."

Commented one aide pessimistically, "The  
Reagan administration is blind, obsessed  
with Nicaragua. But they are not going to  
succeed in overthrowing the Sandinistas. In  
the end what they are going to destroy in-  
stead is Costa Rican democracy."

Tony Avirgan and Martha Honey are Costa  
Rican-based journalists.



## One-way news traffic

BANGKOK—In Somerset Maugham's famous story of prewar imperial rituals, an Englishman posted to Southeast Asia received each month a consignment of the previous month's *London Times* which he would then read each day in proper sequence. He is aroused to murderous passion when a visitor gets to the new monthly bundle first and reads them in a sitting, destroying the pleasurable illusion of news, though long delayed, unfolding in proper sequence.

I'd hoped for a similar delay, on the general supposition that a month- or even week-old copy of the *New York Times* or *Wall Street Journal* would be vastly preferable to the same thing hot off the presses, in that most of the news' judgments and all of the pundits' opinions would have been already invalidated by subsequent events. No such luck. On my Bangkok hotel's closed-circuit TV Ronald Reagan was addressing the American people as I arrived, more or less in realtime, and the next day the local English-language papers carried post-speech analysis at substantial length. I was able to ramble around the Temple of the Dawn, fortified by up-to-the-moment details of the interrogation of the pilot incautious enough to have flown close to the presidential helicopter and of the conduct of Cuban exiles in Indianapolis.

The global village has a main street and it's one way. Associated Press sends out an average of 90,000 words a day to Asia from New York. In return AP takes in about 19,000 words from either its Asian correspondents or from the national news agencies of Asia. Reuters and UPI also send out about four or five times as much as they take in from Asia. Overall, AP, UPI, Reuters and *Agence France Presse* provide over 90 percent of the foreign news printed in the world's newspapers.

The result is a perpetuation of old imperial divisions. In a report in Third World Network Features, the Zimbabwean journalist Dingaan Mpondah points out that each of the agencies has carved out its own sphere of influence from the old colonial empires. AFP in Paris is strong throughout Francophone Africa. AP and UPI have extensive operations in Latin America and are widely used in Japan, South Korea and the Philippines, the area of U.S. control in the postwar period. Reuters is strong in the English-speaking Commonwealth countries. To give one example of what this can mean, 50 percent of all news published in South America comes from AP and UPI, with another 10 percent from Reuters and AFP.

The results of this can be bizarre. The sports page of the *Bangkok Post* on August 19 carried as its main story UPI's report on the poor showing of the U.S. boxing team at the Pan Am Games in Indianapolis, along with shorter AP dispatches on a golf tournament in Oregon and an episode of soccer violence in England. This is not accounted for by the profusion of U.S. (though not of English) tourists in Bangkok. Years ago, Mpondah remembers, the publisher of the *Fiji Sun* used to complain about the flood of agency reports of English soccer matches and other unusable material.

Throw in, on top of all this, the *International Herald Tribune* and one is never really out of range of Western agitprop. It will be only a matter of time—and in a sense it has already happened—before there will be a world paper. *World Today* modeled on *USA Today*, with each nation getting its tiny news hole and making its own contribution to the Great World Soap, which of course will fea-

## ASHES & DIAMONDS

By Alexander Cockburn



ture mostly stories about the weather.

This unbalanced state of affairs has not gone entirely unnoticed by the Third World, which has been calling for "a new information order" for years. The response of the major Western news organizations was to set the whole issue in terms of censorship. They duly denounce an uncouth Third World attempt to "license" First World reporters, doing so in columns and editorials full of virtuous and self-aggrandizing drivels asserting "freedom of speech," the imperishable heritage of the First Amendment and other old stand-bys of little interest to the Third World newspaper readers wading their ways through English soccer results and aware that their own countries will usually make it into the First World press only if they sustain a catastrophe—natural or artificial—claiming the lives of more than 10,000 people, or if they become a strategic domino in the Cold War.

The sort of Third World item that would not get into our hypothetical *World Today* is the following story published by the Mexican newspaper *Excelsior* on July 9: "The U.S. is a great market for all the countries of this continent. Whatever it needs, we Latin Americans provide—tomatoes, strawberries, marijuana, etc. This is part of a structure of inequality and injustice. It is our reality and we have to fight to overcome it, especially when First World needs lead us to commit delinquent and morally degrading acts."

"For example, in recent times the U.S. market has been demanding human organs of various types, and to this request have come responses that are of criminal dimensions. The traffic northward to the U.S. of prospective adoptees is now, in more than a few cases, initiated with the intent of three children sacrificing organs in 'prestigious' hospitals of that powerful nation."

"In San Pedro Sula, Honduras, a short while ago the police found a center where there were 13 captive children, ready to be sent to the U.S. to be used as organ donors. The five persons detained by the police confessed as much. For each child they were to receive \$10,000. A similar event occurred in Guatemala City. Children either stolen or bought from poor families or single mothers were ready to be sent to private U.S. organizations, supposedly benefactors but actually doing a fine business in the sale of human organs. According to the police report, the price per child was \$15,000. The same thing has been happening in El Salvador and Colombia."

The story, by Marco Antonio Aguilar Cortes, concluded with an appeal to Mexican mothers not to send their children northward. The story seems scarcely credible, just as does a recent article in the Italian Communist Party paper *L'Unita* that told of a Colombian child going for a cornea transplant

and returning with the cornea gone. Maybe the stories can be refuted. AP, UPI, Reuters and AFP all have bureaus in Mexico City. It would not be beyond the powers of the reporters in them to investigate *Excelsior's* charges. If they have, then the details have escaped my attention. If they have not, it would scarcely surprise anyone familiar with the rhythms of news from the Third World in the post-Maugham age.

## Spymania

In the Abdication crisis of the late '30s British censors made themselves an international laughing stock by spending hours laboriously scissoring paragraphs out of copies of *Time* magazine. The authorities felt it inappropriate that the British people should be able to read unwholesomely frank reporting of the romance between King Edward VII and Wallis Simpson.

Now the censors have made themselves ridiculous all over again. At the end of July, five venerable gentlemen known as the "Law Lords"—the highest court in the United Kingdom—announced that British news media would not be able to report certain allegations made in *Spycatcher*, the memoirs of a former MI5 security officer called Peter Wright. The Law Lords also said that the press would not be able to report on these same allegations, made in open court in Australia. At one point, before rescinding themselves, the Law Lords even stipulated that the press would not be able to report on open debates on the allegations in the House of Commons.

The British mania for secrecy is nothing new. The press chafes under restrictions that would not survive for a moment in any U.S. court. Even the Reagan administration, with its obsessive pursuit of state secrecy, always justified by "national security," would probably have quailed at the idea of launching police raids on news magazines and television stations in search of compromising material. Yet this is precisely what British police, on the orders of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, did earlier this year when they raided the BBC and the *New Statesman* after the former had prepared—but not broadcast—a documentary, and the latter had published an expose of an impending British military satellite.

In the case of *Spycatcher*, Mrs. Thatcher has now produced the ludicrous situation that tourists from the U.S. with copies of the U.S. edition of the book under their arms can have them confiscated. The press is appealing to the European Court on Human Rights, but this is an arduous and above all lengthy process. No one in the United Kingdom will be legally reading *Spycatcher* for a long time.

There has, naturally, been a lot of editorial spluttering in the U.K. about a "blow to democracy and cherished freedoms," which ignores the point that lacking a First Amendment or a Bill of Rights the British really have very little in way of freedom regarding expression, for the simple reason that the British state has never perceived any sound reason for allowing such freedom to exist. Anyone asking why this is so should read *Spycatcher*. Its author, Peter Wright, was former assistant director of MI5, the branch of the British security services in charge of state security and counter-espionage. Much of the book concerns the suspicions of Wright and some of his colleagues that a director general of MI5, Sir Roger Hollis, was in fact a double agent. They never managed to prove their allegations against Hollis, who is now dead. I can offer, from personal knowledge, one example of the foolishness of this kind of spymania. Wright regarded it as sinister that Hollis never entered in his file his friendship at Oxford with my father, Claud, who was well known for his communist sympathies in the '30s. Hollis' "Cockburn connection" was a big part of Wright's case. The trouble with this theory is that my father's intimate at Oxford was Hollis' elder brother Christopher, and at that point in his life my father was an Asquith liberal, not a communist, and even acted as special constable in the General Strike of 1936. Such is the stuff of which "counterintelligence" is mostly made.

What really frightened the British government and the security services as Peter Wright, retired to Australia, readied his memoir for publication, were his indiscretions about the behavior of MI5 toward Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson. Wright recounts in detail how MI5 gradually became seized of the idea that Wilson might be a Soviet spy, and how that idea was carefully fostered by the late James Angleton, hyperparanoid head of the CIA's counter-intelligence section.

Once again, there was not the slightest element of proof to such allegations. The simple fact was that the security services were filled with conservatives who thought—wrongly—that Wilson was a dangerous radical who should be kept from power. Accordingly, in the months before the election of 1974, a group in MI5 planned to leak rumors about Wilson and destroy his career. As Wright accurately remarks, this enterprise was a carbon copy of the "Zinoviev letter" which had finished off a Labour government in 1928. Masterminding that effort had been Adm. "Blinker" Hall, head of British Naval Intelligence.

Naturally Thatcher's Conservative government is eager to suppress this portrait of a security service plotting a coup against an incoming Labour prime minister. It presumably also recognizes that Wright, often unwittingly, has painted a horrifying portrait of the madness and inverted priorities engendered by the cult of "national security," of the stupidities and misapplied energies fostered by "spymania." And before anyone in the U.S. gets too complacent about freedoms enjoyed here, I suggest they read, in tandem with Wright's book, former CIA officer Philip Agee's recently published memoir *On the Run* and study the damages to democracy done on this side of the Atlantic, and around the world, by this same cult of "national security."

Alexander Cockburn also writes a column for *The Nation*.



# Conservatives

Continued from page 3

Three factors have contributed to the strength of the conservative reaction. First, conservatives see Nicaragua as the test of their commitment not merely to contain, but to "roll back" Soviet Communism. Nicaragua is their Vietnam, and they are determined to win. The Reagan-Wright plan, *Human Events* reported, "reminds critics of the so-called 'peace plan' that this country devised for Vietnam."

Second, conservatives now fear that Reagan is losing control of the presidency and could therefore be convinced by Chief of Staff Howard Baker, Secretary of State George Shultz or First Lady Nancy Reagan to support a peace plan in Central America or an arms-control treaty with the Soviet Union that betrays conservative commitments. "The president is obviously not running the country anymore," Lee Bellinger, chairman of the Conservative Action Foundation, told *In These Times*. "I don't understand what has happened to him. Is he sick, or is he so dumb that he can't follow things anymore?"

Third, Republicans are gearing up for a presidential primary. While many Americans are opposed or are indifferent to contra aid, Republican primary voters support the contras by two-to-one, and conservative activists and donors favor the contras overwhelmingly. Within this group, according to direct-mail specialist Richard Viguerie, support for the contras is "the litmus test" for Republican candidates. As a result, just as the Democratic candidates have been falling over each other denouncing Supreme Court nominee Judge Robert Bork, the Republican

candidates have tried to outdo each other proclaiming their support for the contras.

Former Delaware Gov. Pierre "Pete" duPont IV has called for the U.S. to break diplomatic relations with Nicaragua. Kemp, who last month gained the endorsement of Sen. Jesse Helm's Congressional Club, is leading the opposition in Congress. And even Senate minority leader Robert Dole and Bush have declared their opposition to the peace plans. "We just can't abandon the contras," Dole said in an August 13 press conference. "American credibility can't stand one more trip down that disastrous road."

**Administration confusion:** If the administration actually wanted to make a deal with the Sandinistas, it could use the strident con-

servative opposition to position itself in the political middle, demanding broad concessions from the Nicaraguans while securing "bridge funding" for the contras from congressional liberals. But while there may have been some support for a deal in the State Department—suggested by the resignation of State Department negotiator Philip Habib—the administration appears to have intended the Reagan-Wright plan purely as a ploy to win over Democratic centrists. As it explained to conservative activists on August 12, the administration initiated the plan because it was "10 to 20 votes" short in the House.

But the administration's bad faith has proved its undoing. By agreeing to Wright's

proposal to negotiate directly with the Sandinistas and to suspend the contra aid request, Reagan unwittingly gave the green light to Central American leaders to adopt a plan that would scuttle the contras. At the same time, its efforts to appease conservatives have convinced Democratic moderates that the administration is not serious about negotiations.

Segundo Mercado-Llorens, the lobbyist for the anti-contra Coalition for a New Foreign Policy, believes that if contra aid were voted on this week in the House, it would lose by about 300 votes. "I think Jim Wright made a major blunder," Mercado-Llorens said, "but it worked out well. He stole the center from Reagan."

# Honduras

Continued from page 11

Guatemala as well. Refugees are estimated to make up 5 percent of Honduras' population of four million. About 50,000 of these refugees are cared for by the U.N. high commission on refugees. The rest are left to fend for themselves.

With more than 50 percent of the economically active Honduran population either unemployed or underemployed, the country cannot provide jobs or adequate food and shelter for the refugees. Also, because they are willing to take jobs at lower wages, the refugees have added to Honduras' unemployment woes.

"We cannot handle this situation," said foreign ministry spokesman Castro. "We are being squeezed tremendously."

A successful peace pact would allow for the repatriation of refugees, Castro said. Although some 2,000 Nicaraguan Miskito In-

dians have gone home this year, and 4,000 Salvadorans are expected to leave by December, the situation is still desperate, said Leo Balladares, the foreign ministry's top adviser on refugees.

Equally important is the issue of Honduran families who live along the Nicaraguan border, thousands of whom have been displaced by the contras and by skirmishes between the contras and Sandinista troops. Presumably a peace pact would allow them to go home.

**Squeezed-out families:** This is a difficult issue for the government, because of its unwillingness to acknowledge the contra presence. In Dan Li, a town near the Nicaraguan border, members of the Honduran coffee growers' association (AHPROCAFE) complained bitterly that the government has done little to aid the displaced families. Numbers very widely, but AHPROCAFE estimates about 7,000 Honduran families have had to abandon their homes since the contras ar-

rived in large numbers in 1982.

Some of the displaced have returned home since the beginning of this year, according to Jose Leon, director of the Catholic relief organization Caritas office in Dan Li. Security in the region has improved, because Honduran troops have moved in to keep the contras at bay, other relief workers said. This has also kept the Sandinistas from bombarding the region.

Damage caused by the contras and by Sandinista pursuit of them has exceeded \$14 million, according to Katerino Montoya, president of AHPROCAFE. These are losses Honduras can ill afford.

"If this agreement doesn't work, the problems will continue and probably worsen," Montoya said. "But Reagan says he will continue to help the contras. This means they will stay in our territory, and the problems will go on forever."

Alan Gottlieb is on special assignment for *In These Times*.

# DAVID A — N — D GOLIATH

THE U.S. WAR AGAINST NICARAGUA

William I. Robinson and Kent Norsworthy

For many, the struggle of the Nicaraguan people has become a struggle of David and Goliath, as the United States unleashes its forces against the Sandinista revolution in a concerted effort to reverse history. In this book, two North Americans living in Nicaragua present a carefully documented account of the escalation of the conflict, and of what this has meant for Nicaragua as it attempts to overcome the combined legacy of centuries of underdevelopment and repeated U.S. invasions.

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## Where is Nicaragua?

By Peter Davis  
Simon and Schuster, 351 pp.,  
\$18.95

By Marvin E. Gittleman

# Wading deep into the swampy realm of journalistic ambiguity

**J**OURNALIST AND FILMMAKER Peter Davis (*Hearts and Minds*) has expanded his intriguing, suggestive article on Nicaragua from the Jan. 28, 1984, issue of *The Nation* into a deeply flawed yet valuable book. The theme of book and article is the Sandinista revolution's ambiguity, its combination of liberation and revolutionary authoritarianism. Davis' earlier pose as an agnostic was defensible; by 1987 his readers expect more—such as a balanced appraisal of the Nicaraguan revolution and some conclusions. But, paralyzed by the original format of his *Nation* article and by a peculiar conception of journalism, Davis remains rhetorically on the fence, unwilling or unable to perform the necessary political arithmetic. We are left with "on the one hand, on the other," and an indecisiveness that weakly attempts to masquerade as wisdom.

There is much useful in *Where is Nicaragua?*, and most could learn from Davis' reports. There is a fascinating interview with the aged Stanley Atha, "the last Marine in Nicaragua," who actually chased Sandino through the mountains and canyons of Nueva Segovia in the 1920s. Atha then stayed on, married a Nicaraguan, drew a pension (from the Sandinistas! Davis writes) and still retained his shoebox of mementos—which included valuable dispatches on the problems of fighting against a popular resistance movement in Central America.

Davis reports several enlightening discussions with Nicaraguan businessmen who stayed on in the private sector after 1979, some of whom support the revolution. He frames the issues of liberation theology nicely by comparing two sermons on the same text from the Gospel of St. John, one delivered by Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo (stressing that Jesus had his disciples cast their nets to the right) and the other by a Father Uriel Molina, preaching to a working-class campesino congregation and drawing the lesson of collective action from the same biblical source.

Far less than the sum of its parts, Davis' book occasionally descends almost to the realm of soft-core pornography, as when he raises the question of Tomás Borges' alleged promiscuous virility, or describes a Sandinista party in which the guests don't stay up to watch Halley's comet. The clear inference is they pair up for copulation. A North American is reported as sleeping with a Cuban physician stationed in Nicaragua.

By way of comparison, virtuous

gringo journalist Davis travels chastely—he tells us—with a female translator, who, once when pursued by an amorous Nicaraguan salesman finds refuge on a cot in Davis' hotel room. Although Davis describes himself as faithful to his wife while visiting Nicaragua, his marital fidelity isn't too important.

**News from nowhere:** What is important is Davis' overall appraisal of the Nicaraguan revolution (which he doesn't tell his readers) and his conception of responsible

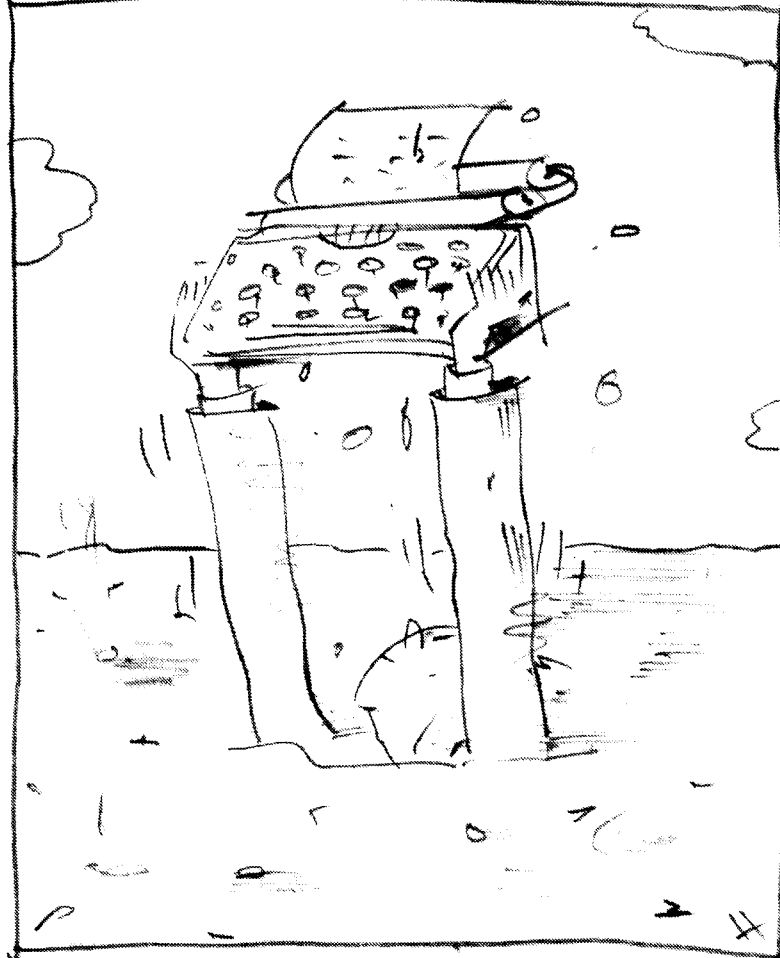
## NICARAGUA

journalism (which he only implies). While rightly determined not to be taken in by Sandinista myths, by contra myths or by visions of a no less mythical "third force" in Nicaragua, Davis ends conceptually nowhere. He approvingly cites both Ronald Reagan and Arturo Cruz on 1986 being the decisive year for Nicaragua. Yet in a book published in 1987 he can not bring himself to offer any overall conclusions.

Instead, Davis defines his role as a responsible journalist against the presumed naivete of North American pilgrims who come to Nicaragua to demonstrate with what he believes are silly slogans and sentimental songs at the U.S. Embassy in Managua. But some of the data he reports is at variance with the caricature of softheaded gringo sentimentalists who come to Nicaragua to work off guilt by defending Sandinista excesses, or to make a pilgrimage to the exotic revolutionary shrine the Sandinistas are creating, or for other barely suggested and at best suspect reasons. He interviewed a North American technical volunteer who finds that U.S. society currently affords little opportunity to those interested in creative political or social endeavor:

*The reason all of us are down here is there's nothing going on for us now at home, and no prospects, no way to make ourselves felt in our own society.... [In the U.S.] you get your degree, and you bang away at some meaningless job for a few years, or a teaching position where you feel alienated from your subject, and you finally get so frustrated you just have to get out. You come down here and immediately your energy begins to come back to you, you regain a little credibility with yourself.*

Perhaps sentiments like these are not the sum total of available political wisdom, but neither are they the *prima facie* evidence of the political idiocy Davis seems to



ascribe to "internationalist" supporters of the Sandinistas, some of whom, like Ben Linder, have given their lives to build a better society in Nicaragua.

**Accentuating the negative:** Others, North American "Witnesses for Peace," for example, cut cane and pick coffee near the Honduran border, offering themselves as a deterrence against U.S.-backed contra invasion. These acts may not amount to a universally valid political agenda, but unresolved in Davis' book is what North Americans can or should do. All he can say is what they should *not* do, and that is be uncritically starry-eyed about the Sandinista project. He's right, of course, but that's not an adequate point to build a book around, nor does he substantiate the absurd charge that uncritical leftist enthusiasm is "as insidious in its way as the right-wing scenario" of a military crusade against the Sandinistas.

"Insidious" for whom? The Nicaraguans? What impact could the shedding of illusions by a few, or even all (still, alas, a few) U.S. leftists possible have on the course of events in Central America? If Davis means that refusing to concede that the Sandinista commandantes could ever do any wrong is bad for the U.S. left, I would agree, but it would take a book on North American leftist illusions to prove it. *Where is Nicaragua?* is obviously not that book.

What Davis did not do as he expanded his *Nation* article is recog-

nize that the primary topic of the book he did write of necessity had to be journalism in a revolutionary situation. This is emphatically not to criticize him for not writing another book than the one he did. Davis *did* write about the experiences and perspectives of a moderately leftist, not unsympathetic journalistic observer of the Nicaraguan revolution. But this viewpoint is presented obliquely, indirectly, unself-consciously, badly. In his best argumentative passages—often paraphrases of Sandinista propaganda—Davis pleads with his North American readers to imagine...

*a war in which a country several dozen times larger than the United States but in the same hemisphere, a kind of metastasized Brazil, deploys its troops along our southern border while playing war games in northern Mexico. Its government supports hostile armies drawn from the most renegade and discontented elements in American life. These armies are encamped on both the Canadian and Mexican borders, from which they make frequent, deadly forays into Michigan, New York State, California and Texas....*

Then, Davis poses the real comparative historical question:

*Would we, under these circumstances, be mistaken to conclude that we were in a de facto—though undeclared—state of war with Brazil? Would we be able to leave in place all the civil liberties we are so proud of? Would the newspaper be free to print ads for*

*the carnival in Rio, and columns extolling the virtues of Brazil and the American insurgents it pays, and would the television networks be free to include nightly reports on the heroism of these insurgents as they burn farms outside of Buffalo, kidnap children in San Diego? Would our ministers, searching their souls for a moral way to confront the danger, be free to preach draft evasion from their pulpits? Would our government be likely to want to negotiate with the rebels, whose military leaders are not only in the pay of Brazil but were supporters of the most brutal regime that has ever run our country?*

**The Bogie factor:** In powerful arguments like these, Davis punctures the illusions that Nicaragua can defend its revolution without upsetting a few teacups. But in other places in this unsteady, unfocused book, he gives voice to precisely those illusions. If there is any reconciliation in *Where is Nicaragua?* it is in Davis' implicit conception of the journalistic function—at least the function of a North American journalist. It is to be above the battle, above all battles, to be cool, Bogart-like in the "plague on both your houses" cynicism; mercilessly expose the fallacies of the U.S. government's counterrevolutionary project in Central America and at the same time give equal time to the view that the Sandinistas are hell-bent on their totalitarian project; above all heap ridicule on the absurd idealistic enthusiasts who are naive (and unjournalistic) enough to try to intervene with whatever slim resources they have at their disposal.

These enthusiasts are the main villains of Davis' book, not because what they do is more evil than the contras, who he concedes are brutal, sadistic and undemocratic, but because they challenge his favorite image of the ironic, detached North American sophisticate, too knowledgeable to appear being foolish, or committed. For some reason that he hasn't seen fit to explain to all his readers, Peter Davis uses these folk (or his caricature of them) as a rhetorical foil for his own bleak but cool vision. Some of them seen in the absurd acts of denouncing their government in Managua may also be the same people who back in the U.S. fight for all those corny things like justice, dignity and equality. Even Humphrey Bogart could (when Lauren Bacall beckoned) shed his uninvolved cynicism and come down clearly and unambiguously on the side of what was, on balance, the better cause. Does Peter Davis aspire to a higher standard of cool than even Bogie? ■

Marvin E. Gittleman teaches history at the Polytechnic University. Among his books are *Guatemala in Rebellion*, *Vietnam and America* and *El Salvador and the New Cold War*.



## SPORT



U.S. baseballers swatted the Nicaraguans, but the Cubans garnered the gold (above), while Brazil's hoopsters slamdunked Uncle Sam.

## U.S. big-stick schtick at PanAm Games

By Michael Moore

**T**HE UNITED STATES OVERRAN Nicaragua this month, totally obliterating the tiny Central American nation. Within a matter of three hours, the Nicaraguans were entirely stripped of any defense. It was an annihilation

the likes of which have never been seen in this hemisphere.

Fortunately, it was just a baseball game.

The Sandinistas were clobbered by the U.S., 18-0, in a game that was called after the seventh inning when the officials invoked the seldom-used "mercy rule," the sports

equivalent of "enough already!" after one team is so far ahead it looks like a football score.

The unlikely setting for this meeting between the U.S. and Nicaragua was not the back 40 of a recently firebombed Esteli medical clinic, but Bush Stadium in Indianapolis, Ind., site of the 10th Pan American Games that concluded in late August.

**Carrying the big stick:** The games, held every four years (this being the first time in the U.S. since 1959), are a relatively inexpensive and bloodless way to re-enact the Monroe Doctrine: the U.S. takes on the other 37 countries of North, South and Central America in 30 different sports and wins most of the medals. If watching the Marines pound back defenseless Grenadians and Cuban airport construction workers turns you on, then seeing the U.S. basketball team crush Aruba might really make your jock itch.

With nothing better to do than watch the cheese line grow while vacationing in my hometown of Flint, Mich., I convinced *In These Times* to send me down to Indianapolis for the Big Game, which promised to be the best grudge match since Somoza Sr. invited Sandino over for a little refried beans and then slit his throat. In keeping with the spirit of the occasion, the ITT travel agent booked me to depart on Delta Airlines and return on Northwest. I hummed Lynyrd Skynyrd tunes the whole way.

**India-no-place:** How do you describe Indianapolis? Once referred to as "Nap Town" because of its lackluster human life forms, the "new Indianapolis" now touts itself alternately as "the Cinderella of the Rustbelt," "the Star of the Snowbelt" and "a Cornbelt City with Sunbelt Sizzle."

It is the city where David Letter-

man used to do the weather and where the 23rd president of the U.S., Benjamin Harrison, resided. Harrison had the distinction of losing the popular vote in 1888 but was installed anyway as president by the electoral college. He's buried here next to another thief, John Dillinger.

Indianapolis was a natural choice for the Pan American Games. The town's rich sports heritage consists of a stolen football team (from Baltimore, literally in the middle of the night on March 28, 1984) and a car race every Memorial Day in which two dozen autos drive in circles for 500 miles with lucky fans allowed to keep any tires or crankshafts that fly into the stands.

Actually, Indianapolis got the Pan Am Games by default. They were to have been held in Chile, but Gen. Pinochet was worried he might need the Santiago Stadium for purposes other than athletic competition. So Indianapolis got the nod.

**Propaganda volleys:** As the Games opened on August 7 with an elaborate ceremony produced by Walt Disney Productions, it was clear that the event would not be without controversy. The U.S. Army Band played the national anthems of the other participating countries, but could not—or would not—play the Nicaraguan anthem. So the Nicaraguans were left to play a cassette tape of the song over a boom box. As the tape ended the three dozen or so Nicaraguan athletes shouted, "Viva! Libre! Nicaragua!"

At that moment a small plane flew over the Indianapolis Motor Speedway towing a banner that read: "Cubans Defect—Call 547-8820." It was the work of the Cuban American National Federation, which sent dozens of anti-Castro Cubans, mostly from Miami, to demonstrate

against the Cuban presence in the games. At the Cuban baseball games, the right-wing Cubans threw hundreds of leaflets onto the field urging the team to defect.

Team members tore them up and threw them back into the stands. At a boxing match, the Miami Cubans had begun to destroy a Cuban flag when three members of the Cuban boxing team decided they needed a little more practice on the punching bag and felt that these Castro-bashers would make a fine substitute. Within minutes, the Miami Cubans were doing their Sonny Liston impersonations and

**It was an annihilation the likes of which have never been seen in this hemisphere. By the end of the first inning the score was 10-0.**

the unscheduled bout came to a quick end when police broke things up. (Important lesson from Protest 101: When desecrating another country's flag, do it at water polo matches, not near a boxing ring.)

Robert K. Brown, publisher of *Soldier of Fortune* magazine, also offered a \$25,000 reward to any Nicaraguan or Cuban athlete who chose to defect. But, unfortunately, the only people who wanted to defect were from American-backed regimes. Ten members of the Dominican Republic delegation—four weightlifters, four wrestlers and two cyclists—skipped town and were last seen, according to one official, "heading east on a bus to New York in search of work." Actually, the two cyclists, while

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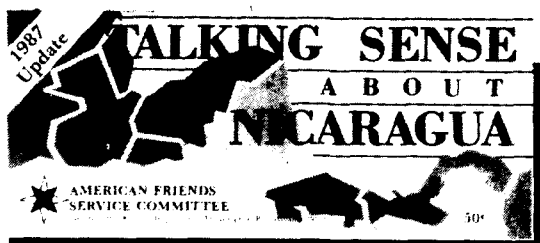
This new NARMIC/American Friends Service Committee resource examines the pervasive fear of communism in the United States and how it is used to justify the current U.S. policy in Central America. Responds to charges that U.S. national security is at risk.

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competing in their event, just kept tooling down the road until they were out of sight. The head of the Dominican delegation called the 10 "deserters and traitors."

**Transplanted tradition:** The game of baseball is as American as Marines in Nicaragua. So it made sense that during a series of U.S. invasions and occupations of Nicaragua in the first two decades of this century the Marines taught the Nicaraguans how to play baseball. Soon it became their national pastime and the dictator Somoza fielded an all-star team that played local teams throughout the country.

It was at these games that the peasants had their only chance to vent hostility toward Somoza by cheering on the home team. With the Sandinista victory in 1979, the repression ended but the enthusiasm for baseball remained.

Last year, the Nicaraguan team went on a road trip to California to play a number of West Coast college teams, most of which the Nicaraguans defeated. The tour engendered a lot of good will, if not a reminder of how poorly California teams play baseball. The easy victories in California perhaps deluded the Nicaraguans into thinking that the U.S. national team was similar. By the end of the first inning, when the score was already 10-0, this was one group of Sandinistas who were definitely California dreaming.

The Nicaraguan team was being housed and fed at the local U.S. Army base, Fort Benjamin Harrison, which gave the visiting press corps much to chortle about. Being surrounded by the U.S. military was nothing out of the ordinary for these players, though, and most remarked that they felt "right at home."

It was no easy task trying to talk to the Nicaraguans. The military police and the Pan American officials refused to let me into the area where the Nicaraguans were staying. It was a "new rule," I was told, instituted "about five minutes" before my arrival at the gate. Did this have anything to do with the fact that the Nicaraguans were receiving a lot of favorable press, I asked one official. "You could say that," he replied.

**The Bianca factor:** At that moment, Nicaraguan native Bianca Jagger was whisked through the gate with no credentials, no questions. "You see," the sergeant told me, "if only you had sex with rock singers, you could get in, too."

Bianca had been hired by CBS Sports as an "essayist" to do a piece on her countrymen at the games. (The Nicaraguans were competing in baseball, swimming and weightlifting.) Later, when I arrived at the stadium, I saw Bianca again receiving the red-carpet treatment and decided to stick close by and make it appear I was with her. (I realize that no amount of imagination on the reader's part will be able

to conjure up this scene.) Bianca was wearing Sandinista red (dress) and black (stockings) and she easily drew the players out of the dug-out for some pre-game interviews, which until her arrival they had refused to do.

**Mission of peace:** First baseman Nemesio Porras of Managua said the Nicaraguan team was in the U.S. "on a mission of peace"

## Cuban boxers decked right-wing antagonists in an unscheduled ring-side bout.

and asked that the U.S. "stop the aggression against my country." He said he lost two uncles in the revolution against Somoza in the late '70s and that he and his fellow teammates support the Sandinistas. This comment led a *New York*

*Times* reporter listening nearby to comment, "Yeah, and if they lose this ball game, Ortega will ship them all to the Miskito Coast."

Infielder Ariel Deleudo said that the team was "trying to defend our country through sports. Our friends are back home fighting in the fields and we are here to show that we are just as good as the United States of America."

Second baseman Julio Medina, who was drafted by the Cincinnati Reds five years ago, said that the Nicaraguans had "a simple desire for peace. We are fighting for our survival, and thinking about the war at home affects the team psychologically." He pointed out that a number of the country's best players were not in Indianapolis because they were in Nicaragua fighting the U.S.-backed contra force.

**Blow by blow:** The U.S., unfortunately, didn't send the contras to play ball for them in Indianapolis and opened up the first inning with a barrage of runs. When the Nicaraguans, who were ironically desig-

nated as the "home team," came to bat in the bottom of the first, they were unable to score off the American pitcher (and Flint, Mich., native) Jim Abbott, who was born with only one hand.

That's the way the rest of the game went, with the U.S. coach ordering double steals even after his team was ahead 12-0. When the slaughter was finally called to an early end by the umpire in the seventh inning, Roberto Vargas of the Nicaraguan Olympic Committee commented that "the game was like sitting through the last three months of the Iran-contra hearings."

The team was visibly dejected and by the time the Pan Am Games were over on August 23, they had compiled a record of 3-4. The only medals won by Nicaragua were stripped from the team when it was discovered that weightlifter Orlando Vazquez, who won three bronze medals, had been taking a banned drug to lose weight.

All was not lost, though, as the

Nicaraguans were winning, at considerable cost, the real-life competition for survival at home. The U.S. mercenary force still did not hold one inch of ground after five years of war and the American public still opposed aid to the contras. As one fan in the stands remarked after the game, "One thing's for sure: the peace process in Central America has a better chance of succeeding than the Nicaraguans had here today."

The Nicaraguan national baseball team will tour the U.S. during the next few weeks, visiting Racine, Wis., Seattle, Wash., and, happily, a number of cities in California. For information on times and locations, contact Athletes United for Peace, (415) 543-6671. ■

**Michael Moore** is the former editor of *Mother Jones* magazine and the *Michigan Voice*. He is currently making a documentary about General Motors and will begin publishing a critical review of the media later this year.

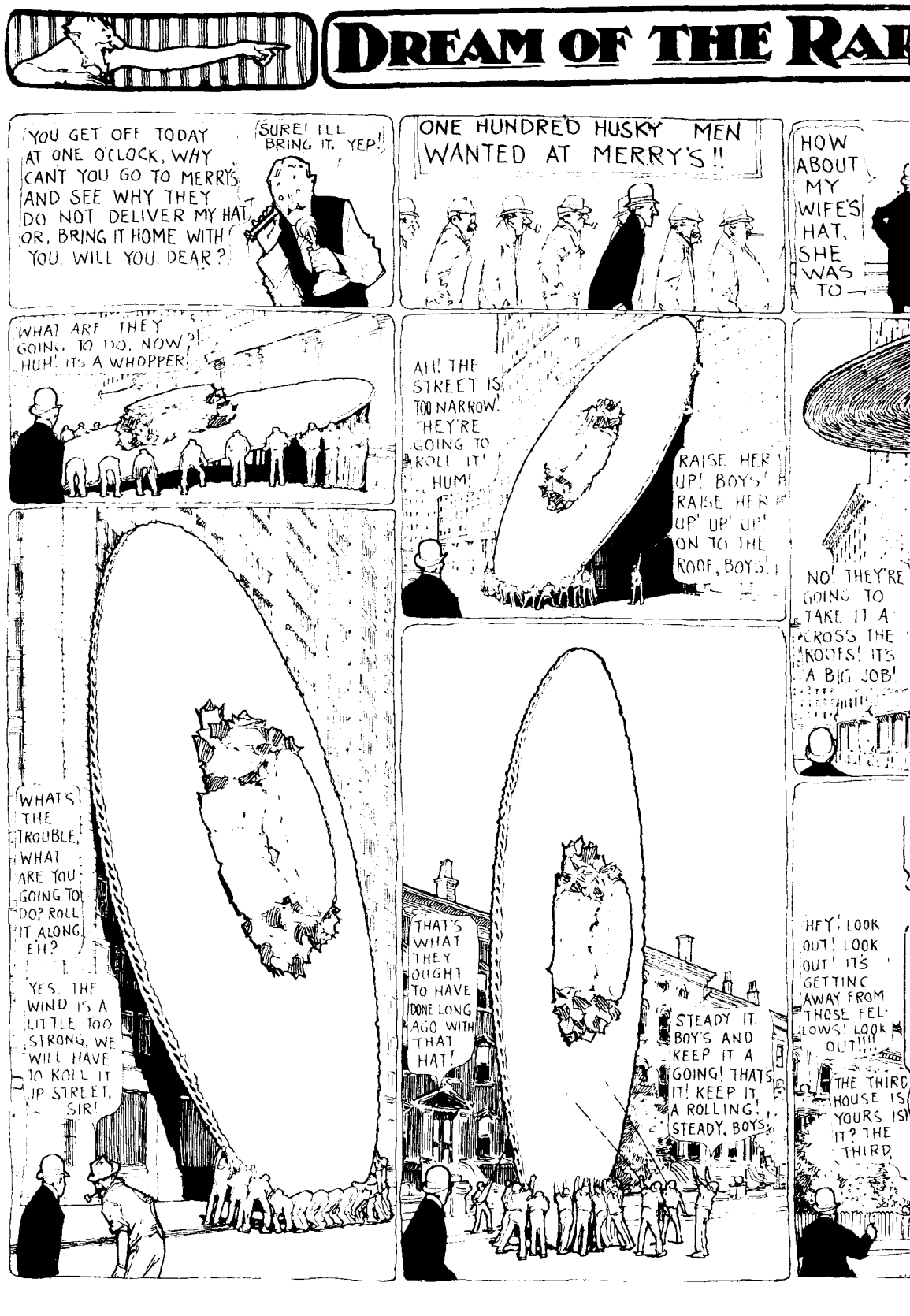
## Fine 'tooning by past masters

With the recent vogue in adult comics, such as Art Spiegelman's death-camp serial *Maus* and Frank Miller's Batman redux, *The Dark Knight*, a nod to past masters seems in order. None looms larger on the artistic horizon than cartoonist and animator Windsor McCay, creator of *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, *Gertie the Dinosaur* and *Dream of the Rarebit Fiend*. McCay's surreal Sunday paper dreamscapes and groundbreaking animations in the first three decades of this century

### ART

are but a part of the artist revealed in John Canemaker's sumptuous new biography, *Windsor McCay, His Life and Art* (Abbeville Press, 1987). The influential artist was also a vaudeville star with his fast-draw act and an esteemed editorial cartoonist. If you're drawn to McCay's volume you might check out another cartoon pioneer's sadomasochistic masterstrokes in *Krazy Kat*, the *Comic Art of George Herriman* (Harry N. Abrams, 1986). The text is rock solid and the art...well, it's better than getting bonked on the head with a brick.

—Jeff Reid





# Oil

Continued from page 13

the repayment problem, Costa Rica and Honduras have received only intermittent shipments of Mexican and Venezuelan oil since 1984, while shipments to El Salvador under the terms of the accord have all but ceased. In mid-August the Guatemalan foreign ministry reportedly said that by year's end Guatemala will also not be able to make the payments on its San Jose Accord debt.

But Nicaragua had experience long before these countries of the accord's commercialization. In 1982, when economic problems caused the Nicaraguan government to admit that it could not make payments on its \$22 million oil debt to Venezuela, the flow of Venezuelan oil was promptly cut off.

Mexico continued oil shipments of 10,050 barrels per day in 1983, accounting for some 64 percent of Nicaraguan oil consumption. But that amount was cut back to 3,850 barrels a day in 1984. And when in March 1985 the Sandinistas told Mexico they could not pay up on their \$500-million oil debt, the De la Madrid administration followed the Venezuelan example and cut off oil shipments. Since then, said a diplomat here familiar with Mexican oil dealings, only "a couple" of Mexican petroleum shipments have been sent to Nicaragua, both of those only because Nicaragua met the Mexicans' demand of "cash on the barrelhead."

**Soviet motives:** It's unclear why the Soviets have cut back on oil shipments after more than two years of supplying the lion's share of Nicaraguan oil needs. Nicaragua's Ruiz credited it to "limitations" faced by the Soviet Union this year due to other commit-

ments. But political observers speculate that the Soviets may be trying to lower their profile in Nicaragua in order to gain concessions from the Reagan administration in Afghanistan or Europe. One Nicaraguan economist here said that the Soviets cut oil shipments because they interpret Nicaragua's reticence to further centralize its economy as economic mismanagement.

A clear indication that the Nicaraguans have been left in a bind by the Soviet cutback was Daniel Ortega's public request of Lusinchí and De la Madrid to establish "new formulas" easing the terms of the San Jose Accord so that oil shipments to Nicaragua could be resumed. But Lusinchí clearly torpedoed the notion of a joint Venezuela-Mexico special deal for Nicaragua in his final press conference.

Lusinchí put his foot down in response to reporters' questions, saying there was "no possibility" of a compromise to allow resumption of shipments without payment of the debt incurred under the accord.

"There is no value judgment whatsoever with respect to any regime or country" in that decision, he said, but "there can be no conditions which differ from those set down" in the agreement.

**"The Central America thing":** One diplomatic source here said that "Venezuela would like to wash its hands of the entire Central America thing, but can't because of national pride." Not only is Venezuela a co-signer of the San Jose Accord, he explained, but its role as one of the four Contadora countries keeps it duty-bound to continue participating in regional efforts toward peace and development.

Despite Venezuela's refusal to resume oil

shipments without debt repayment by Nicaragua, it is possible that the Mexicans might do so in coming months with only a "token repayment" from Nicaragua on its \$500-million debt, according to the diplomat, who requested anonymity.

Another diplomatic source from a prominent embassy here said he had heard the Mexicans might "go it alone" in supplying Nicaragua with oil in coming months. He said Mexico could take advantage of a precedent set by Venezuela in 1983 when it sent petroleum under terms of the San Jose Accord to Curaçao, despite Mexico's unwillingness to match the shipments.

"Something is in the air and [Nicaraguan Vice President Sergio] Ramirez definitely asked for the oil when he was here in June," said the diplomat.

Those observations coincide with reports circulating here that Mexico may join other major Latin American countries in stepping

up economic aid to the Sandinista government later this year. According to differing versions, the Nicaraguans sent several emissaries to key Latin American capitals in May and June seeking economic aid to compensate in part for the Soviet oil cutback, but also for economic difficulties resulting from the Reagan administration's ongoing economic embargo against Nicaragua. Argentina is mentioned as the likely source of cereal grains in such a bail-out package, with Mexico cited as the petroleum supplier.

**The "perfect solution":** Whether or not such an overall Latin American plan exists remains to be seen. The Mexican Foreign Relations Secretariat has denied knowledge of any such plan.

But according to a private U.S. oil analyst, either within the framework of a regional economic aid plan for Nicaragua or on its own, it appears probable that Mexico will resume at least limited oil shipments to Nicaragua in the near future. But where will the financing come from?

"I was told by an official in the [Mexican] Foreign Relations Secretariat that the Soviet Union is going to give the Nicaraguans the cash instead of the oil," said the oil analyst.

"Mexico will have to get some repayment in order to justify renewing shipments," said the oil specialist, who noted that the difficulty of tracing financial aid as opposed to petroleum tankers would provide the Nicaraguans with the "perfect solution" to their oil woes. At the same time, it would give the Soviets the lower profile they are said to be seeking in Nicaragua. It would also provide Managua with the financing to begin repayment on the debt to Mexico, the gesture of good faith said necessary to renew the flow of Mexican oil to Nicaragua. □

Mike Tangeman is a U.S. journalist based in Mexico.

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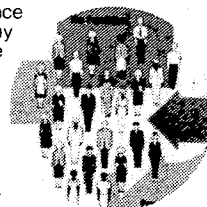
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September 12

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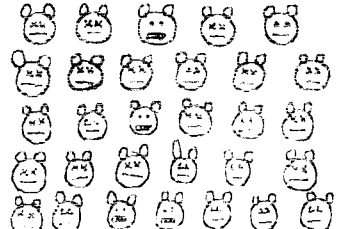
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- ANY WORDS OF WISDOM BY THE PRINCIPAL
- ANYTHING MIMOGRAPHED
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- ANYTHING ANNOUNCED BY THE ASSEMBLY

**HOW TO GET BY WHEN YER SMARTER THAN YER TEACHERS**  
(1) DON'T ANSWER THE ASSEMBLY  
(2) DON'T ANSWER THE ASSEMBLY  
(3) DON'T ANSWER THE ASSEMBLY  
(4) DON'T ANSWER THE ASSEMBLY

### LESSON 15: HOW TO GET BY WHEN YER SMARTER THAN YER TEACHERS

REMEMBER: TO THE SLOW, DIMWITTED BEAST KNOWN AS THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, SMART = UPPITY.  
SO, WHEN YOU ARE SENT TO THE OFFICE FOR INSUBORDINATION, ACT ABASHED.

**WRONG**  
THE CRIME IS NOT THAT I REBELLED. THE CRIME IS THAT THE OTHER KIDS DO NOT-- THAT THEY ARE TOO BORED AND REFUSED TO CHALLENGE THE STULTIFYING RULES, THE ABUSE OF POWER, AND THE SHEER JOYLESSNESS OF EVERYDAY SCHOOL LIFE.

**RIGHT**  
I'LL BE GOOD FROM NOW ON, SIR.

#### NEVER CORNER A TEACHER

ALTHOUGH GENERALLY DOCILE, TEACHERS HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO ATTACK SAVAGELY WHEN BACKED UP AGAINST A WALL.

REMEMBER, TEACHERS HATE SAYING:  
I DON'T KNOW.  
AND THEY CANNOT EVER SAY:  
I'M SORRY.

### WHAT NOT TO SAY TO YOUR GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

IF YOU KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT MAKING INTELLIGENT CAREER DECISIONS, HOW COME YOU'RE A GUIDANCE COUNSELOR?

#### WISE UP

- LOOK AROUND YOU. THE OTHER KIDS DON'T HAVE A CLUE.
- SAME WITH TEACHERS.
- SAME WITH PARENTS.
- FIGURE IT OUT FOR YOURSELF.

#### HOW TO GET BY WHEN YER AS STUPID AS A ROCK MUSICIAN

BE INARTICULATE  
DON'T STRAIN YOURSELF  
FIDGET  
LAUGH MORONICALLY  
SPEAK IN FRAGMENTS  
BECOME A ROCK MUSICIAN

#### HATE SCHOOL???

CONSOLE YOURSELF WITH THIS THOUGHT:

AT LEAST YOU GET TO GRADUATE AND SCRAM--  
YOUR TEACHERS NEVER GRADUATE.  
THEY'RE STUCK HERE.

#### NO MATTER HOW BAD IT GETS, DON'T KILL YOURSELF!!!!

THEY WILL MAKE JOES ABOUT YOU.  
DEATH LASTS EVEN LONGER THAN GRADE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL PUT TOGETHER.  
THERE IS NO TV IN HEAVEN. (THERE IS TV IN HELL, HOWEVER.)

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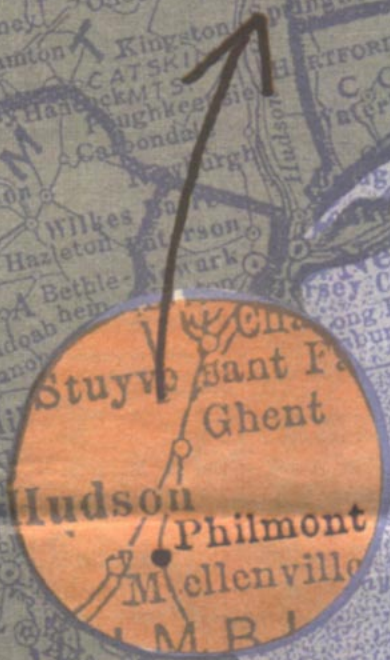
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# North of Nowhere

Ollie-mania sweeps his hometown, but North is a no-show.



By Billy Goodman

**T**HE IRANAMOK-CONTRA HEARINGS COVERED many issues, but they left the following questions in my mind: *What is the Harmonic Convergence and when did it occur?*

New-Age mystics and aging hippies say the Harmonic Convergence started at dawn on August 16 and marked the end of cycles in the Mayan and Aztec calendars and the beginning of 25 years in which humanity can enter a new era of peace by harnessing collective spiritual energy. Barring that, the world may end.

But the real meaning of harmonic convergence was revealed to me on August 15, when dozens of reporters, 20 New York state troopers, several hundred polite demonstrators and a handful of the curious converged on Philmont, N.Y., (population 1,642) for the village's annual Community Day. This year it was rechristened in honor of the hamlet's favorite son, Lt. Col. Oliver "Larry" North.

Unfortunately, the guest of honor didn't show. Village Clerk Patricia Near said North's mother called to say he wouldn't attend. He hadn't even received the official invitation because "his mail comes by the truckload."

Mayor Philip Mossman, holding court for reporters near the headquarters tent shortly after the 10-minute parade in North's honor, 24 IN THESE TIMES SEPT. 2-8, 1987

explained that the idea for "Oliver North Day" came during North's testimony in July. "We decided to have the day to clear his name."

The mayor, who wore a button with Ollie North's visage on an American flag and a red, white and blue tie draped around his neck, was in high spirits about what all the attention might mean for his once-sleepy village, located a few miles up the road from Claverack, N.Y. "Maybe somebody will open up a store," he said. "A lot of business people are here."

**And how is business in Philmont?**

On Oliver North Day, the answer was mixed. By business people, the mayor may have meant some youthful vendors representing a firm known as PBR Novelties. They pushed their shopping carts laden with balloons, pennants and other paraphernalia along Main Street before, during and after the parade. And they were disappointed. The few hundred demonstrators and few dozen North supporters who came to Philmont apparently preferred local hamburgers to the vendors' imported wares.

At Stewart's convenience store in the center of town, a harried clerk said, "Thank you, Ollie," as she struggled to keep up with crowds beseeching her at the counter. Ollie North programs displayed prominently on the counter, however, didn't seem to be selling well.

The mayor's boosterism and desire to put Philmont on the map are symptoms of a deeper malaise in Philmont. Cliff Wexler,

whose wife is director of Philmont Hearth, Inc., a home for the mentally disabled on whose grounds much of the day's events took place, said, "Real estate in the county has skyrocketed, but not in Philmont." The demonstrators, most of whom came from the surrounding county or from Albany, an hour away, recognized Philmont's need to break out of the doldrums. One of them, soft-spoken Eliot Asinof, said, "Philmont is famous for being a depressed area."

**What do Oliver North and Elvis Presley have in common?**

They both look good in uniform (remember Elvis in *G.I. Blues*?). And their former homes are now shrines. Elvis died 10 years ago August 16, and his Memphis home, Graceland, attracts half a million tourists a year. When I made the pilgrimage a few years ago the basic tour—without a side trip through Elvis' plane or bus—cost \$6.50 (now \$7). For that price a supplicant boarded a bus across a busy street from the mansion, was conveyed to the front door and was led through the house by a polite guide who struggled to inflect enthusiasm into a spiel given day in and day out. After the house tour, which included the famous jungle room complete with waterfall, visitors could roam the grounds, look at Elvis' several automobiles (and even sit in one), and meditate at Elvis' grave.

Ollie North's boyhood home, not yet widely known as Fall-from-Graceland, is at

20 Maple Avenue in Philmont. During Ollie North Day, it was off-limits to curiosity-seekers, protected by a better security system than the one purchased for North's present home by Gen. Secord. A rope festooned with "keep off the grass" signs ringed the entire property, wrapped around trees at regular intervals to keep it at chest height.

The white clapboard house's present owner, Joe Raco, sat at the end of his cement walk, just inside the rope, reading *Sports Illustrated*. Like tour guides at Elvis' place, he seemed the slightest bit bored as he rose to repeat his story to another damn reporter who wanted to know "was that really the garage roof young Larry slid off as part of a self-imposed rehabilitation for a knee injury?"

By the time I spoke with him Raco said he had already been interviewed by more than 20 reporters. Raco acknowledged to one reporter's question that diverting money to the contras was legally wrong, but nevertheless called North a "patriot" and said he'd be happy to have his kids emulate the Marine. **Who knew Ollie and when did they know him?**

In the wake of any historic event, more people claim to have been there than actually were. Don't be surprised, then, if tens of thousands one day claim to have been at Ollie North Day, though state police put the crowd at 2,500 and some reporters (who were being more diligent than I was) estimated it at a mere 1,000. Likewise, many who did not will probably claim to have gone to school with Ollie, to have dated his sister, or at least to have had premonitions of his greatness while watching the former altar boy in church.

The first person I talked to in Philmont was a white-haired woman sitting on her front lawn. She wouldn't reveal her name but said she had been a cafeteria worker when young Larry went to school and remembers him as a very nice boy. She said the red ribbon she had tied on a porch column meant "I just think the world of him." But she added, "I don't approve of him lying. He was covering up for somebody. I think the head of our government should have checked it out." Then, expressing a sentiment about President Reagan that, in less strident form, was surprisingly common among the solidly Republican people of Philmont, she said, "He's been wrong ever since he's been in there."

**What is the state of youth in Philmont?**

William Robertson, six years old, was dressed in jungle camouflage shirt (partly obscured by the requisite Ollie button), olive pants and a military helmet. His mother said William dressed himself. When asked what he thought of the lieutenant colonel on his chest, he answered, "Good," with a big smile. When asked if he knows about Nicaragua he shook his head "no," smiled shyly, then asked his mom if he could go see the ambulance. Would he like to be in the Marines some day? Again he shook his head "no," and answered, "Army."

Two older boys, near high school age, stopped cruising long enough to say what they thought of North. "I'm kinda split," Keith Schrader said. "Kinda like he's cool, but he shouldn't've got away. He was honest tellin' about it, but he wasn't honest in the first place."

A still older youth with curly blond hair and "question authority" on his t-shirt turned out to be from Massachusetts. Had he come to protest North's actions? No, he was looking for action. He said he thought the day would be the Kent State of the '80s and was disappointed that the crowd wasn't bigger. ■

**Billy Goodman is a Brooklyn-based writer.**